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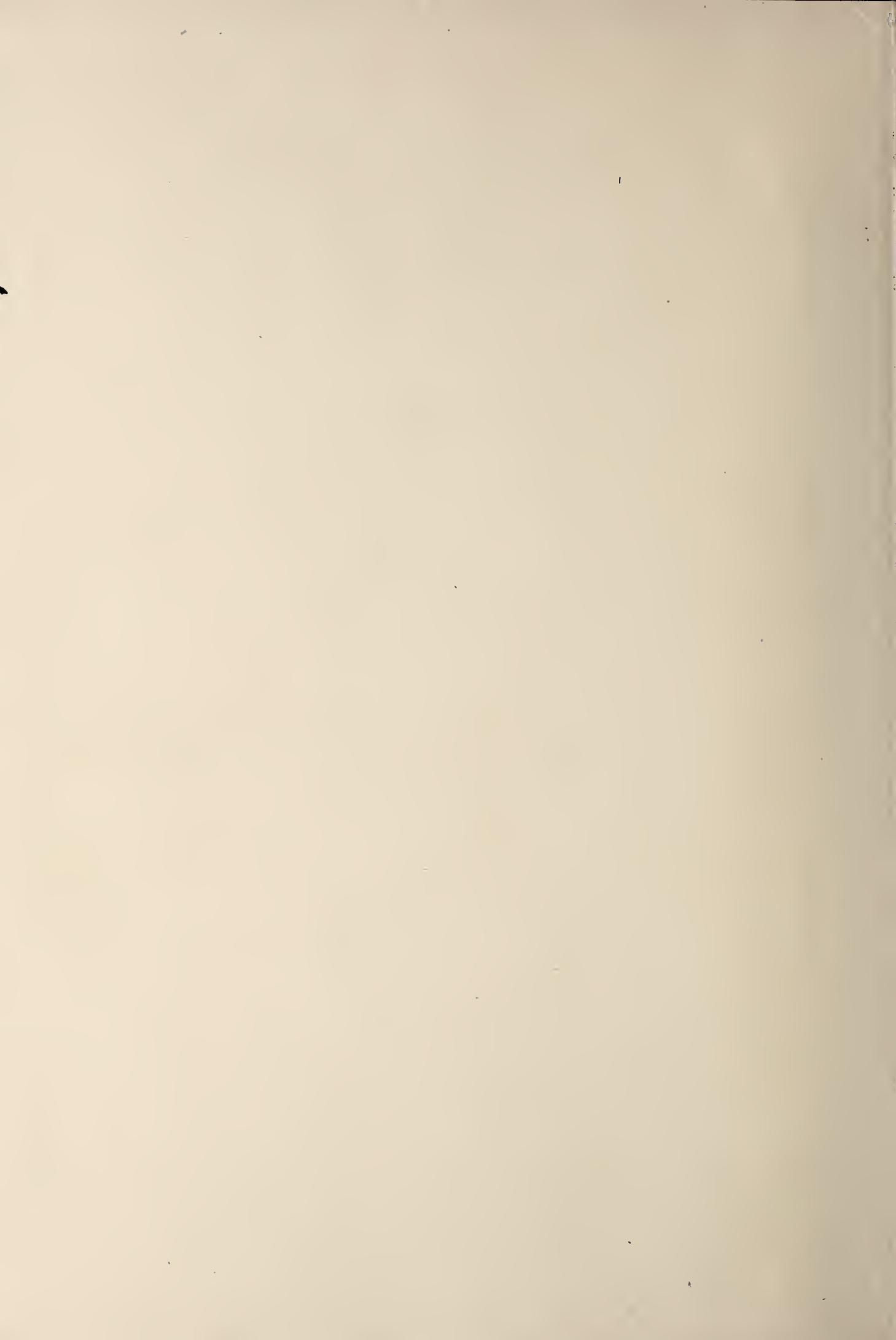
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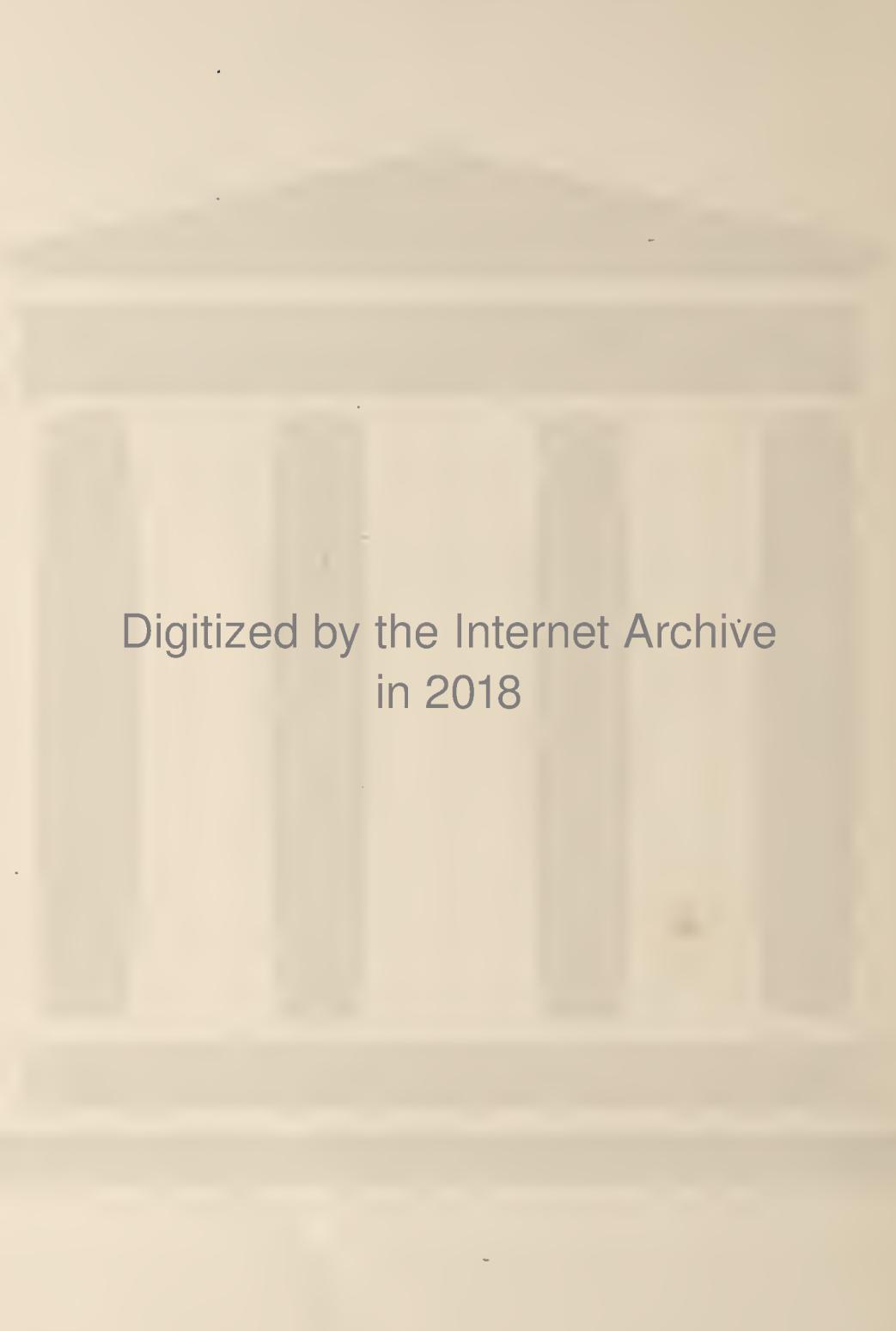
DENNISON
BEGINNINGS

1840-1878

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DENNISON BEGINNINGS



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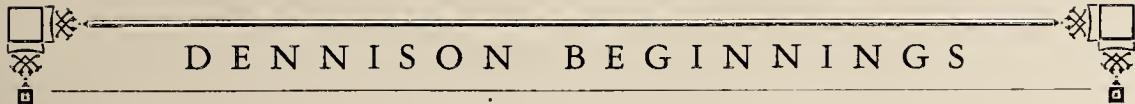
THE DENNISON HOMESTEAD

BRUNSWICK, MAINE

When the Dennisons moved across the river from Topsham to Brunswick, twelve-year-old Aaron carried a young elm from the old home and planted it by the new one. This tree, now grown to majestic proportions, is known through all the neighborhood as the Dennison elm.

(Frontispiece)





DENNISON BEGINNINGS

Chapter One

1840 - 1844

THE THREE DENNISONS

Colonel Andrew

Aaron Lufkin

Eliphalet Whorff



NDREW DENNISON, one-time Colonel in the state militia, and Deputy Sheriff of Cumberland County, was in 1840 a popular citizen of Brunswick, Maine. He was incidentally a cobbler, but found that trade more and more unprofitable as machine-made shoes came on to the market.

Moreover, his bench had never been his only interest; indifferent farming and local politics occupied him in turn, and he was perpetually casting about for some new way of making the family fortune. His eldest son, Aaron, was likewise eager to take up with any new venture that seemed promising.

Four years previous to the opening of this story Aaron wrote his father about what seems to us the wildest of wildcat schemes, but at that time was considered as a serious possibility:

I have been thinking more about the silk business since my last to you. I am impatient to be getting more largely into it than we have heretofore been thinking of. The *one thing needful* seems to be, as has always been the case with us, the only thing in the way to prevent our dipping into the business quite largely. I have thought possibly that I might by a little extra management raise \$100 to invest in that way; making a kind of partnership concern of it, you to furnish the land, labor, etc., and I the money. With the sum above mentioned we could get 1500 to 2000 trees and have \$30 or \$40 left to lay out for extra help such as you could not well get without money. I calculate for the number of trees I mentioned it would take something like

4 acres of your land, consequently you would have to put a considerable more fence. I wish you to let me know if you think it expedient thus to invest money and if so, how it can be done to the most advantage and what we might reasonably expect would be the profit of it for the first 4 or 5 years to come. In the spring you will have had the good of seeing how well the situation of your land is suited to the growth of the tree and as regards their standing your down-east winter.¹

This project, if ever begun, was not continued, and in 1840 the Dennison family was as far as ever from having a really competent living.

Yet Colonel Andrew was a man of sterling Yankee qualities,—ingenuity, pride in his workmanship, honesty, and a restless striving for new things which gave him no peace, but which had brought him little profit. All of these qualities he passed on to his sons, and two of them, born in a more propitious age than their father, have added a new word to the language, "Dennisonian."

AARON as a boy learned the watch-making trade in Brunswick, and about five years before the opening of this story left home to seek his fortune in Boston.

In 1840 he was struggling to establish himself as a jeweler, though his ambition was to revolutionize the watch-making industry by turning out the parts mechanically. His genius was for invention, not business, and as a retail jeweler he was not making great headway. Yet because he was the eldest son and of a naturally thoughtful, generous disposition, the whole Dennison family looked to him for advice and even financial assistance.

ELIPHALET, at his brother's advice, stayed in school at Brunswick till he was about seventeen. Then, as was natural, Aaron took him under his wing in Boston, apprenticing him first to a shoe dealer and then to a wholesale dry-goods house. After leaving home, the boy began to feel himself a man, and as we see from the following letter to his father, his life-long quality of independence developed rapidly:

You say that Aaron speaks highly of my business qualifications but seem to have it understood that my other qualities are spoken rather slightly of. He seems to dwell strongly on extravagance in

¹To preserve the full personal value of these letters, the original spelling and punctuation has been retained, except where it might obscure the meaning.

clothing. I presume he has spoken to you about a coat and pair of pantaloons. These are the only times I have not gone perfectly by his instructions and when you hear my reasons for disagreeing with him in these, I have reason to hope that you won't put quite so much blame on me as you do now. I really think Aaron is sorry for saying quite so much as he did. You say that I should be grateful for the past; I am as far as my nature will allow me to be. It isn't in me to be grateful. It is my intention to do all I can to recompense the priceless favors I have received. I am greatly indebted to him both in body and in mind. That of the body I am in hopes I shall be able to repay one of these days, but that of the mind I never expect to pay.

A certain difference between these two brothers is illustrated by the following paragraph from the same letter:

Aaron has been made uneasy several times lately by the receipt of small parcels of money from persons that he had lent it to get home with. This was so uncommon an occurrence that he thought they must be crazy or foolish. I believe it is his intention to bequeath such money as he gets in this way to the "Society for ameliorating the condition of the Indians." If he were to get all the money due him in this way and should save it, he would have a very good capital to set up in business with.

Eliphalet was generous, too, and in many ways no more practical than his brother, but he was perhaps born under a luckier star, for there is a great contrast between the life stories of the two young Dennisons.

Turning back for eighty-five years to the time when our story begins, we find that Eliphalet, at twenty, has left the dry-goods business and been sent as Aaron's agent to open up a retail jewelry store in Bath.

Prospects in Brunswick were none too bright, according to a letter from the Colonel to Aaron, written Valentine's Day of 1841:

I received your kind letter in due time & was glad to hear that you and yours were all well & I am happy to say that by the blessing of god we are all enjoying the same blessing here and in Bath where your mother has just finished a week's visit & I spent last Sunday night & part of monday with them; your mother being there I started on



YOUNG AARON TRYING TO LEARN WHAT MADE THE BLACK BOY WHIP THE HORSE
THAT KICKED THE BELL THAT SOUNDED THE HOUR

Reproduced from a series of etchings by John Wolcott Adams

foot & alone after meeting strait over the turn pike to Bath. I arrived there just after sunset giving me a beautiful & pleasant walk the weather and the walking being fine—They all appear to be getting along well there Eliphilet has got into his new Shop & I hope he will do well . . .

You want me to say something to you respecting my prospects for obtaining the P. Office. In answer to your inquiry I am constrained to say that my prospect looks rather small . . .

I have therefore made up my mind to content myself with jogging along in the old ways believing that all will turn out for the best with regard to it although shortsighted as we are we cannot see how . . .

I expect there is something due you by this time for rent over and above the repairs done on the house last fall. Mr. Wyatt & I will have a reckoning and see how the matter stands & let you know soon—

The same spring Aaron wrote Eliphilet of his difficulties in Boston:

I shall write father in a few days. In the meantime he need not worry himself about being turned out of our good old home . . .

I think there is some prospect of my effecting a change to my advantage soon provided I can put things into decent shape—that is collect some few of the hundreds now due me and place them into the hands of my creditors—Unless I can do that thing and speedily I am a used up man—

Meantime the Bath venture had proved a failure, and Eliphilet was trying again, this time setting up a jewelry shop of his own in Bangor. Here the potential market was larger and he had great faith in the future, but from past experience had learned to anticipate the worst.

E. W. to his father, May 2, 1842:

The prospect is decidedly flattering for me now. How long it will be so I cannot tell. My profit last week amounted to \$49.57, this however is more than double the amount of any other week. Business has greatly increased since I came here and must continue so to do. There is one thing quite certain I shall not be able to meet my six months paper but as it was understood that I should have lenity when I began I shall expect it. All is if my creditors are not satisfied with my course they must come upon me in the natural way and I must slope to Texas.

In Brunswick Colonel Andrew had hopes of bolstering up his finances by securing the postmastership, but entered the race against too heavy odds, even though his friend, Dr. Holden, said "any government that would not appoint you postmaster had ought to go to the devil."

By fall, however, having failed of the postmastership, Colonel Andrew wrote E. W. that he was about to try setting himself up as an independent shoemaker, and received the following reply:

I am glad you are going to set up on your own hook. No doubt you will do better and enjoy yourself better. You can choose your own company and not be bored with the slang natural to shoemaker journeymen and equally repulsive to you. No doubt there will be some inconveniences to in part offset those but in the aggregate you will be better contented than as formerly situated.

But by another year the Colonel was dissatisfied again, and this time thought of moving away from Brunswick. Eliphilet looked up a new location for him, at Brewer, across the river from Bangor, and reported on August 20, 1843:

Everyone agreed that it would be a first rate place for a shoemaker—as much work as he can do and good pay—his customers being mostly forehanded farmers.

Now I have looked at the fair side of the question . . . I will turn over. That it would be a great task for you at this age to take what might be termed an uncertain step is true. Moving from old associations & friends to make new from old, this to form new ones & many objections that I have not time to mention and that your imagination will readily picture to you—and that will be more duly appreciated & properly weighed by you than my inexperience can be capable of.

Colonel Andrew decided that after all he could not leave Brunswick, and in December received from Eliphilet a surprisingly outspoken comment:

I send you \$10 which you wished me to. I was glad to see such a spirit manifested as was in your letter—in reading it I imagined you as much as 10 years younger than reality. This makes my saying true

that if "you could content yourself to sit on your bench steadily for a period longer or shorter it would clear you from the cursed thraldom that has ever encompassed you and embittered your very existence." I am in the same and god only knows when I shall free myself. My situation now is critical. I am worth something but it is in goods and no sale—unless I can raise 1000\$ on my stock I must ask an extension. How all this will come out time only will tell.



COLONEL ANDREW'S HOME IN TOPSHAM, MAINE, 1819-1820.
E. W. WAS PROBABLY BORN HERE.

Yet in spite of the discouragement in his business affairs, Eliphalet had taken a step a few months before which was bringing him great happiness. That was on June 30, 1843, when he married Lydia Ann Beals of Bath. The following December, he described to his father the success of his new domestic arrangement:

My health never was better than it is now and all the damper upon my perfect happiness is my pecuniary circumstances. Lydia is contented and happy, fat and hearty. She is more than my most sanguine expectations and seems to like her husband tolerably well.

Again, April 7, 1844:

Lydia Ann says she never enjoyed so good health for so long a time in her life. Mine you know is always good. Our enjoyment has been so perfect that it almost makes me fear that the future must bring some check. Such happiness as ours was never known to be lasting and especially to one so illy deserving of it as I am.

On July 14, 1844, E. W. stayed away from church to philosophize with his father, and made some very penetrating observations for one of his years:

I stay away from meeting today for the purpose of writing home, not that I have anything in particular to impart but hoping to by this means draw a letter from you. You are not aware what an influence you might possess over my mind if you were disposed to exercise it by keeping up a regular correspondence. We are all aware of the difference in disposition of us three brothers & we are all too well acquainted with each others natures to require the least explanation of them. It is my opinion that in one particular we are not so dissimilar as in all others, "i. e." want of firmness & determination. I know this is my own composition, but may possibly err in regard to others though think not. Aaron's enthusiasm in certain pursuits might lead you to think that he was possessed of great strength of purpose. Ben's determination never to venture beyond his depth might be construed in the same way. Mine to get along in a way peculiar to myself & so far, without the advice or consent of friends would at an outward glance lead to the same conclusion. However, it is not so. "there is a tide, etc" I think that tide is now on the flood with the whole drive of us brothers & if properly conducted will place us above the buffets of the world. I must confess that I think the current began to flow upward about 2 years since with me & that I have been indifferent to its flow almost to make me think that it is pretty well satisfied with its trial & willing to quit it up, & oh if I

was possessed of determination I would be no longer lukewarm, but would buckle to the oars and throw out the tow line & stead of following up leisurely the floating current, I'd pull ahead.

Eliphalet's youthful character analysis was confirmed by the years. Benjamin never ventured, and that is all history needs to record of Benjamin. The other two made history, each in his own way. But as yet Eliphalet had found no real inspiration to "pull ahead."

Eliphalet wrote his father of new developments in Bangor, September 8, 1844:

Within the last 2 months there is considerable change been going on in my arraingements . . . In the first place I have formed a copartnership with Mr. I. S. Tompkins . . . He is a man of substance & perseverance & we calculate split the difference between my disposition & his and conclude we shall make a pretty strong team. I have also offered the firm's paper to my creditors @ 62 per cent on what I owe. So you see I am a failed man as you predicted. Well my creditors seem favorable toward me all will pass off well . . .

The prospect is better with me now than ever before. On all occasions of my former attempts in business I started with a faint heartedness which I do not see reason to feel now. I have always said before that I was starting on a voyage of great risk & uncertainties from want of foundation & experience. I have the vanity to think that there are but few better buyers or salesmen than I am & if I had more correct principal & practice of accounts I should (*should consider myself one of the first men in the land*) but I am improving in this as you will perceive by my letter.

Thus the three Dennisons were struggling along in a more or less unsatisfactory way, when suddenly the jewelers' paper box business, appearing in the family letters without warning or explanation, pointed the way to success.

Chapter Two 1844 - 1849

Aaron and Andrew Dennison in the Box Business

SUDDENLY, without warning or explanation, as we have said, the box business appeared in the Dennison affairs. In Eliphalet's letter to his father, September, 1844, there was no reference to a new industry in the family. But by November twentieth, we find Colonel Andrew writing Aaron an entire letter on the subject and the business had then obviously been going on for some time. But as earlier letters do not mention it, we can only conjecture how it began.

The idea of making jewelry boxes for his own use must have come to Aaron several years prior to 1844. A tiny box, strong but rather roughly made, is in the

History Room, inscribed in Eliphalet's writing: "One of the boxes Julia made in Boston 116 Washington St.—1839." In that year Aaron set up a jewelry shop for himself at 116 Washington St. His young sister Julia, then

only thirteen years old, spent the winter with him, and helped him economize by making boxes for the store.

Apparently it occurred to Aaron that other Boston jewelers would be glad to buy a domestic box instead of placing their orders six months ahead, for at that time jewelry boxes were for the most part imported in semiannual shipments. Here, then, was a new outlet for his father's craftsmanship and perhaps a source of income for the family at Brunswick.

Family tradition says that Aaron bought material in New York in 1844 and carried it to Brunswick, where his father cut the boxes and his two sisters,



SISTER JULIA'S BOX

Julia and Matilda, made them. He then took the product to Boston, and sold it among his friends. The demand for these neatly made boxes grew rapidly, as the imported boxes were not only expensive and limited in supply, but exceedingly clumsy.

With Colonel Andrew the box business was "neck or nothing," and abandoning all his other pursuits, he threw himself with remarkable energy for a man of nearly sixty years into the manufacture of boxes. Aaron, however, had a less pressing interest in box making, and merely took what time he could spare from the jewelry business to act as purchaser and salesman for his father. Not a scrap of writing from Aaron on this period has been preserved, but the Colonel's voluble letters to his son tell us the story.

In the first, dated November 20, 1844, note the many evidences that the business had been running some time:

I write you to inform you how we are getting along. We are now in the full tide of experiment but whether successful or not remains to be seen. We have made 5 gross today for the first time I believe since we commenced. I suppose you have received the freight by Chase that was put on board about a month ago. I shall want more white paper soon as we have not more than enough to last ten or twelve days and think we shall have to send for more colored before we get through, but can't tell yet how much if any for I don't know how much there was nor how much we have used, but will let you know in season if we want more. We shall want more white paper than you sent first . . .

I find the cutting of the colored strips to be a tedious job with the conveniences I have for doing it. It is impossible to come at anything like perfection in this branch of the trade. The paper is so highly glazed that it cannot be confined, and the cutting with a common knife is a miserable slow process to make the best of it. I should like to see Mr. Worthley¹ or any other man living cut 10 gross or even half of it in a day with the contrivances I have. Just step into Worthley's and see if you can't get a little information on that point if you can. I have a plan in my head which If I had the change to spare would obviate all difficulties but it would take the whole of my wages to

¹Mark Worthley, a manufacturer of band and fancy boxes, Boston.

furnish labor saving machinery for one year if I should get everything I want.

A machine for cutting the strips is about as important as the corner or $\frac{1}{2}$ ¹ machine and I suppose would cost about as much as either. It would not be unlike the $\frac{1}{2}$ machine only larger, and with more power. . . .

About the stock for 50 gross of packing boxes I think you need not get it for some time yet. If you can vend the jewelry boxes had we not better keep constantly on that branch? Think of it and let me know.

I don't feel able to get a corner machine large enough for cutting the corners and I don't want to make them without if there is enough to keep us employed on jewelery.

N. B. I don't see how I can get along short of 20 or 30 dollars as I am owing my help considerable and must have some to keep the wheels in motion beside.

In his letter of November twenty-fourth, the Colonel gave early expression to the time-study theory:

I send you my watch which for the first time since I had it refused its duty. I want you to overhaul it and put it in motion again in time for the bearer to bring her back with him as she is now a very important piece of house hold furniture to us in our new business.²

The girls must have this constantly before them when at work as they do everything on time and by means of which they have been able to perform a greater amount of work in a day than they or I ever expected. For the last 4 days they have made one and $\frac{1}{3}$ gross per day and I think by constant practice they will be able to exceed that. . . .

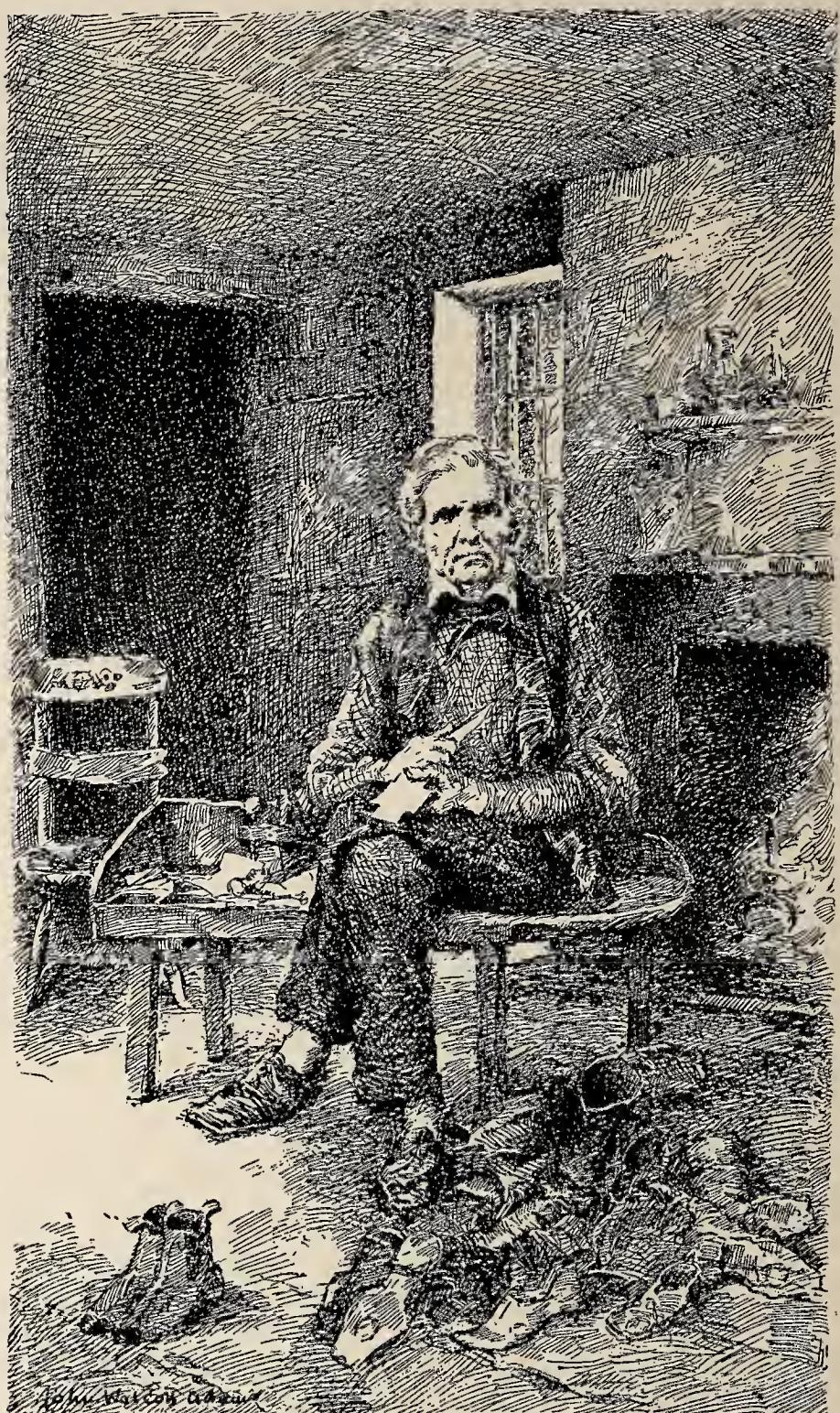
I pulled my sign down long ago and have not earned a dollar at anything else since I commenced this business.

By February of the next year the question had come up of applying power to some of the machinery, but Colonel Andrew voted against it:

You had better not send the wheel yet. Every nook and corner of our room is full to overflowing. If we get in anything more than we have got we must take it to bed with us as the only chance. The machine is near that now, as people generally talk.

¹So called because simultaneously with cutting out the corner, it scored the two edges, cutting them halfway through the cardboard.

²This watch is now in the History Room.



COLONEL ANDREW AT HIS BENCH

Reproduced from a series of etchings by John Wolcott Adams

Two days after this he wrote a letter which throws much light on the development of the business. Competition from foreign products had already presented itself. Another problem, which has haunted the box committee to this day, was causing even then a great deal of trouble—the standardization of sizes. We note also the presence of a second quality in the line. Dennison quality standards likewise put in an early appearance, and it was the factory end which insisted on their being maintained.

There is one thing which has operated favorably on the score of economy as it costs nearly nothing for fuel, our bodies and light being in common winter weather about sufficient—

When we get all our machines into a good shop and in good operation so that I can increase my help I think we might be able to compete with the German in the manufacture of the articles of the specimens sent, but we must have the same kind of stock to do it—Matilda has tried her hand at imitating the most difficult one the stuffed ring box and has succeeded very well. . . . Had we not better keep along pretty near home till we gain a little more experience?

We have heretofore altered our plans of sizes and kinds so often that it has taken no small part of my time to make new diagrams and calculations as well as new sets of blocks, 3 of which I have to make for every size. . . .

I forgot to acknowledge the receipt of the cloths &c. very much obliged—They came in good time as my old stock had become rather thread bare and some of them absolutely ragged—

I never was better situated however to wear tattered garments than this winter, for I see nobody, as I am constantly in my Factory except on Sundays, and then they are so glad to see me that they don't think to take the trouble to examine my wardrobe.

I will just say, now that I think of it, that we must have in future a stouter article for bonnet board than our present stock—It is the greatest failure in our No 1 Boxes—If no stouter can be obtained we must have recourse to some thing else—The blue of the lot of paper you sent for the 2d quality J. Boxes is poor stuff, rotten & homely I think we had better not use it—

On February 17 Colonel Andrew sent Aaron his first costs record with the remark, "You may think they come high but you must bear in mind that they are made of costly materials."



AARON

Two years went by without any startling developments. Aaron's purchasing methods had evidently been haphazard, for on June 20, 1847, Colonel Andrew took occasion to complain:

We ought to have now $\frac{1}{2}$ ton of Straw board . . . and good lining enough for our best work to cover it all for I had better be obliged some times to put fine lined board into coarse boxes then coarse lined into good boxes as I some times are obliged too—I should need at least 4 tons of Board lined and seasoned fit to work with different quality of lining and comprising all the different Numbers used to enable

us at any time to execute any order which might be sent with anything like decent dispatch but this I do not expect and must be content to do well as I can—

Again July 25, 1847:

You say you are going to order some straw board if there is any in the market—

That "if" is what will ruin our business yet I fear unless some traverse can be worked to get around it better than we have of late

I don't want to preach terror but all the Breaking up Machines and other head flaws I have Encountered since I commenced the business is not a circumstance compared with the disarrangement of my business for want of suitable stock—

In my last I said there must have been a considerable falling off of my business since the commencement of this year compared with last—

I have since run over my Book to see; and find that from Jan. 1st 1846 to July 23d I sent to market \$1094.96 and from Jan. 1st 1847 to July 22d I have sent \$1154.64 about \$60. more than last year but when I take into consideration that I have a hired man¹ to pay this year beside

¹Algernon Hinkson.

my other extra expenses of living I am still of the belief that altho' my business has exceeded last year somewhat my net profits will considerably fall below that of last year as The whole amount last year was about 1900.00 This year at this rate will be about 2000.00.

Thus we see that though the business was holding its own, it was hardly growing by leaps and bounds, and was undoubtedly suffering from Aaron's divided attention.

In this same year Julia Dennison, who probably made the first Dennison box, became the bride of Algernon Hinkson. This young man, who had gone to work for Colonel Andrew a few months previous, was proving himself an invaluable aid in the box shop.

Julia lived only about a year after her marriage and when she died, left a daughter, Ann Julia, to be brought up by Matilda. Henceforth, Matilda was the only woman of the family to have an active part in the new business. Nearly three years younger than Julia, Matilda possessed many Dennison traits to a remarkable degree. She, too, was always eager to take up "anything new," though her eagerness was tempered with judgment, as was not always the case with her brothers and father. From her father she inherited skill and pride in craftsmanship. She was always the one to whom the most difficult samples were given to reproduce. Her workmanship had much to do with setting that high standard for Dennison finished products which became known even in the earliest days of the business.

The latter part of 1848 Colonel Andrew described to Aaron various practical problems of manufacture which had arisen:

I shall send in a case tomorrow one tray¹ made with gilt covered divisions as you suggested and although not so perfect as we shall make the other 14 which we have underway it is nevertheless an improvement on the first sent—We used white cotton on this for cushions because it is softer than colored but as the ends cannot be perfectly concealed it shows somewhat to disadvantage and proves after all to be a bad improvement—There are in this 7 divisions but if you should prefer 8 we can easily make the alteration and have them as wide as the ring box—I send also one nest of the rough 41s . . .

¹The first mention of jewelry trays.

I believe you said once that we could cut our usual lots and cover a small part of each in this way and lay by the remainder but that would never do; we should be in *hot water* all the time. We can but

just manage to keep the wheels in motion in the most direct *go ahead* method and if Algernon was not a *paragon* we could not do that, so little time do I get to assist him in cutting and yet my whole time is taken up in one branch or other of the business—He is the *main spring*, and I the *regulator*; all the rest are wheels of more or less importance.

My *small improved* Paper Box Machine¹ is the *Back Bone* of the whole business after all, without which all of us together could do nothing . . .

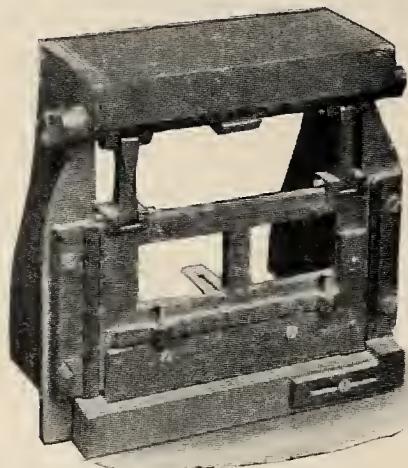
With regard to Eliphalets Calafornia fever I have only to say that as he is now innocent of any partisipation in *stealing* that *Territory* from the lawful owners he had better not now partake in any way of the stolen goods and thereby make himself as bad as the thief. . .² besides Eliphalet is comfortably situated now and it is always best to let well *enough alone*—If there was any necessity for such a *wild adventure* it would be a different matter but I can see none whatever—He can get a good living here among *human beings* and that is all he needs—

This is the first mention of Eliphalet for some time. He had given up the Bangor venture and was now located in Boston with his brother at the latter's jewelry store. Aaron's soul was bound up in transforming the watch industry from handwork to machinery, and the details of the rapidly growing box business were becoming a nuisance.

Eliphalet fortunately did not succumb to the California fever, but instead began his apprenticeship in the new business by relieving his brother, and in it struck a vein of gold with a greater yield than rewarded the Forty-Niners.

¹The corner machine. His machine for cutting strips never materialized, possibly because it was found that the Worcester shear, already on the market, served his purpose.

²California had just been acquired as the result of the Mexican War. This war was particularly unpopular in New England, where the acquisition of California was considered a plain steal.



COLONEL ANDREW'S BOX MACHINE

Chapter Three

1849 - 1850

E. W. Dennison Enters the Business

THE year 1849 was an important one for E. W. Dennison. At thirty years of age, for the first time in his life, he was actually needed in a definite place to do a definite work. Aaron had at last secured the offer of a little capital to help him with the mechanical manufacture of watches on a larger scale than before. He was, therefore, anxious to step out of the box business, and Colonel Andrew cast about vigorously for aid, as the Boston end began to show signs of neglect.

On July 22 he spoke in no uncertain terms:

Not a lisp of information yet from any source concerning Stock—

Is it not passing strange that I can't get a word from you or Eliphalet about the new kind of Jewelry [boxes] he spoke about having made when here.

Why I might as well get . . . I was going to use a verry homely saying but on second tho't I will give it up. I have written twice before requesting to know whether yea or nay and have received two or three letters since but not one word about them. Just as if it made no difference with me whether we work or play, but for myself I am pretty well satisfied that there is not *over* half the profit in *loafing* as there is in having something to do and something to do it with, especially so far as Algernon is concern'd. As to myself it is of but little consequence whether I work or play; but to see two great *lubbers* beating the streets day after day it hardly looks respectable, even if we could make a good living at it.

On the same day Eliphilet wrote his wife of a great change which had come over him during the past week. His wife had been staying in Maine since he left Bangor but now with hopeful prospects of a business in Boston, the husband and wife with their two babies, Henry Beals and Ella, were to be reunited. Eliphilet had at last found the needful enthusiasm to "pull ahead."



LYDIA ANN

though few— $\frac{2}{3}$ a box for strawberries for you and all these confessions I make without fear or trembling for they have all passed away and are amongst the things that were, for the whole week has passed without my spending 1.00, the last of the week since Wednesday without 25cts. and I can truly say I never reviewed a week past that I was so well satisfied with in my life—

I am going to be mean and I Glory in the thought—I am satisfied that this letter will give you more pleasure than any love letter that ever I wrote, if it dont tell me of it

I expect I feel much like an old toper after taking the pledge & getting well over it. . . This week has been such a week as I never passed since I was ten years Old. . . This castle is the only one I ever started at the foundation.

¹The shilling was a former coin denomination issued by the separate states. In Massachusetts at this time it was equal to 16 $\frac{2}{3}$ c.

I Get along finely with my new notions of economy & the more I Study into my former way of getting along the more astonished I am that should have been such an idiot—

At first as often as once or twice a week I would pay $\frac{2}{3}$ ¹ for Lodgings in preference to going out to the lonesome place & then smoke 3 or 4 cent cigars & occasionally when particularly lonesome go and roll ten pins & Something Else Equally Expensive—Now & then treat—drink one glass of beer a day Sometimes two Occasionally have cider or ale for dinner—Ice Creams

On October first, 1849, Eliphalet took over Aaron's end of the box business, the immediate cause of the change being hinted at by the former to his father, January 11, 1850:

You have heard me speak often of this barter business of A. L. D.'s being my worst obstacle in business and think you can easily see how it might be so when we know that some of Aaron's principles are as scattering in community as maple trees are on Brunswick Plains. As to dissolution of the union following this expression of opinion, it can't be helped for as long as I have this end of the rout to attend to I shall endeavor to exercise my judgment to the best advantage of all concerned i. e. *with your concurrence.*

At this time there was merely a verbal agreement between Eliphalet and his father. It was understood that each was to have 20% profit,¹ but Colonel Andrew also charged \$1.50 per day wages, while E. W. felt forced by New York competition and the inconveniences resulting from Aaron's barter trade to offer a 15% cash discount, thereby reducing *his* profits, as he claimed, to 12%. In the course of the year disagreement and misunderstanding of the terms of partnership caused endless bickering and nearly had disastrous results for the business. E. W. felt himself imposed upon at every turn; his father charged too large wages, put his costs too high, expected E. W. to bear all charges incidental to the business, and in general did not understand the many problems of the salesman.

Yet in spite of these troubles E. W. was very enthusiastic over his new work and wrote to Colonel Andrew, on January 11, 1850:

As to overstocking the market we do not $\frac{1}{2}$ supply nor do we manufacture enough to $\frac{1}{2}$ supply N. Y. city alone.

With our facilities for manufacturing we could sell \$50,000 a year if we had the capital and disposition, as easy as we can 5,000, big but true.

It is always the salesman, circulating among his customers, who feels the pressure of market conditions most keenly, whereas the man at the factory has too many problems of his own to worry over those of the salesman. It is true

¹That is, Colonel Andrew was to charge E. W. 20% in addition to factory costs and E. W. was to fix the selling price so that he could make an equal profit.

that Colonel Andrew, safe in his Brunswick stronghold, did not fully understand what his son was up against. E. W., on his side, had not yet tempered his enthusiasm with tactfulness, and occasionally wrote his father in a very curt and dictatorial manner. For instance, on August 28, 1850:

I am obliged to give a lightning order and it must be executed. If you can't do it without having a good scold you may put it to me the hardest kind, but execute the order and in time.

I want 200 Wed Cake Boxes made and here Monday night or Tuesday morning without fail. Now if you have to leave all other work and work nights and Sundays on these, *have them here*. Let Algernon change his machinery the moment you get this for cutting W. C. and let 2 good hands paste as fast as they can follow all ready for the Lace paper that is ordered from New York and will be here Friday morning, and you will get Friday night or Saturday morning. This you can put on Saturday and have them on board the express Monday. Get along the balance of the 1000 as fast as possible. . . . N. B. Those W. C. Boxes must come, there is not time to argue. We will argue afterwards.

In two days another abrupt command followed the first:

The Lace Paper did not come but will tomorrow morning & you will have it tomorrow afternoon. It must be put into the boxes the same night if the girls have to work into Sunday.

E. W.'s instructions to Colonel Andrew, September 17, 1850, showed the young man's temper getting the better of him:

In your letter this morning you say "Enclosed is sample of Lace Paper" but there was none, so please try it again.

As to W. C. Boxes they must [be] continued and made in larger quantities. After we have introduced an article it will not do to stop making.

We will make some arrangement that will free you from loss on them.

The mail boxes are a disappointment to me for more reasons than one. The board is too light & they cost too high. It seems very strange to me that you should put \$18 paper where \$5 would have answered just as well. You evidently made a large mistake on the cost of these. Would please me by looking over the figures again. . . . I

think if you figure again on these you find them to cost about $\frac{1}{2}$ of 6.00 & perhaps less. If you have put on \$18.00 paper where it should have been \$5.00 you must make the loss not me. I think it is bad policy for you to waste such nice paper because you have no immediate use for them. Bristol cards must be hurried up. Cut all you have on hand.

This letter called forth a spirited reply in which Colonel Andrew threatened to take the business away from his son and sell it outside of the family to two of his neighbors in Brunswick. It was a stinging reminder that after all his father was still "boss." The thought of having to relinquish this promising infant box business into alien hands was like a nightmare to Eliphalet and aroused a torrent of feeling which he poured forth without restraint.

September 21, 1850:

When I recd your letter this morning & had read it my feelings were of so varied nature that a description would be impossible. Maddened, Sorry & Disheartened alternately & which predominated it would be hard to tell. Maddened that there was the least chance that the business that I had made my whole study for the last year to build up on a firm basis & to lay a foundation for a future support for my family & of late in particular have had even higher dreams of possibly a competency should just as I had commenced reaping a harvest be snatched from me. . . .

Had you told me a year ago that for one year only I could have the business, I should have been less fond of spending my profits in introducing the business. Neither would I not only have been not content but I would have insisted on my right from the first of having the goods at 20 per cent advance as per agreement which would have given me a balance to show that would have satisfied any reasonable man that I was competent in point of means to have assumed the business now. 8 months of the last year I was paying a fictitious price for the goods 49, 53 & C of all that was manufactured & it would have averaged 10 Gro per week. I paid 75 cents per gro more than I should have paid. The sum total of this alone would look well to me if it was in the right place.

Disheartened. Why should I not be so? 33 years of age, no trade, no credit (not even with my own father) & my only means of support for my wife & children & only possible chance of competency snatched from me to increase the gains of one already rich and



E. W. IN 1854

one so despisably mean that if he were my brother I should have no affection for him. Your sons come honestly by one virtue. They are none of them mean. Nor was you or you would not have struggled with poverty so long as you did with the faculties you were endowed with.

God only knows what will become of me if you decide to do this. My wife & children too. She is not able to earn her own bread. These thoughts make me feel discouraged.

The above will suffice to give you some insight into my state of feeling. Today has been the one most active in my life. My thoughts have dwelt on this subject without cessation. Now I will answer your letter.

Your ac't will be made out at the end of the year & it will be satisfactory to you. You say you have been in the fog the whole year. This is the 1st time this year that you have asked for your ac't. As to your earning your living for the last year I should be pleased to buy your profits for \$1200 for the last year. You speak of not having made over \$800. Why your percentage alone is over \$800 and if I understand you right you have charged me \$1.50 per day and 20 per cent added which is the snug little sum of \$540. It is not my fault that you have not made over \$4000 worth of [goods] I have never said enough. As to it being by no means certain that you shall get your pay I could pay your whole balance next week & have something left. I have not made but one bad debt since I took the business & that amounts to \$14 & I will pay 50% total loss \$7. . . .

Now we come to that part of the letter where you fear competition. Get the cutter patented & I would not fear competition from the devil & whatever you do afterward do this instantly it will not answer to delay. Set about it immediately on rect of this.

For all I have said against your selling out still it has been my cherished wish for the last six months that you would do so & now I hope you will sell to me & think you will. The matter can be fixed to your satisfaction I think if you are willing to encourage me in the least as your son. I took a hasty sketch of matters time since—it shows some small gain. Suppose we call the effects that would be necessary to sell \$2500. \$825 is Bank funds. We will take care of this the 1st year by reducing the amts. gradually. The 20 per cent that you now draw would just do this. The remaining \$1700 you are in no haste for. Suppose we fix it even 3 years in instalments. this same 20 per cent

will take care of this. You are free from the cares & risks of the business except so much as would be required to superintend the manufacture for which you should set a salary. This all looks fair enough on paper you'll say but you will be afraid you shall not get your pay. Well s'pose you don't get the whole of it. It is self evident you will get the 1st & 2nd years as there is still \$800 capital behind. Even allowing this is never paid you can cut me off in the will. For I well remember the remark you made when I asked you why you were so opposed to my having all over 20 per cent. That was that you thought you could keep my money for me better than I could myself.

Now sell out to me & this be the forfeiture. I do consider myself better qualified than any other man to carry it on. I know the best sources for stock & flatter myself that I have not showed any want of shrewdness in the purchase of the same. I have also got a knowledge of the market & prices competition &c that no other man has. Then here lies the trouble you are afraid I shall be extravagant. One thing be sure of if my income were doubled I should not live one jot nor tittle faster than I do now. It is now $\frac{1}{2}$ past 11 & I will close for tonight.

Over the week-end E. W. carried his troubles to Aaron and received comfort and support in his own views. Monday morning, therefore, he was able to finish his letter more calmly:

A. L. is decidedly opposed to your selling out to have the business go out of the family & justly thinks that as he was instrumental in getting up the business that he should have some influence in the matter of disposal. He also thinks that the preliminary movements to getting a patent should be immediately taken. He will write soon. Please answer this immediately & if I have erred in writing as I have my excuse must be my over excited state of feeling.

Colonel Andrew's threats were not carried out, nor did he sell out to his son, but relations between them were not improved. Eliphalet's carelessness in business detail was a constant source of irritation to the old man, the more so since it was a family trait from which he himself could not claim exemption. E. W.'s impromptu manner of keeping books is illustrated in a letter written by him about November 23, 1850:

In regard to the chest of 8th of Sept. I had made up my mind that it was not far out of the way for you to throw it in as about a fair off sett to the charges that I have neglected to make & of which I sent no bills—If in the few bills that I sent for as vouchers I found 172\$ that I had not charged how much might there have been that I have never sent bills of—And besides are you certain that you sent a chest at that time without charging it—

The errors \$95.13 are to offset certain charges that were made through mistakes say Bristol board & C—It is correct as it is—In regard to Richards ac/—I find by referring to Papers that there was due you from Richards \$24.65 & due Preestly from you 27.81 showing a balance against you of \$3.16 which I paid and now charge it to you having neglected so to do before—I took the statement of Richards ac/—from his books & suppose it to be correct.

Is it to be wondered at that Colonel Andrew complained of being in a fog? The clash of these two vigorous personalities continued and for awhile threatened the normal development of the business. An ever-recurring point of dispute was the division of profits, which E. W. felt was decidedly unfair. With loose bookkeeping on both sides it is difficult to determine the justice of the case, and evidently there was much to be said on each side. E. W. argued his case in plain terms on December 6, 1850:

I have made an additional reduction in price which I was under the necessity of doing to get the custom into cash system & I expect you to meet me on this point. And deem it absolutely necessary that you should. I have had a talk with A. L. today & am happy to say that he coincides with me in this respect.

When you look at the subject square in the face you will undoubtedly agree with us.

In point of expense of the business let us see, Interest, freight Pattern cards, traveling expense, Porterage, &c. All come on one side.

Then trouble of carrying on the business is more evenly divided than you have been disposed to think. I will not enumerate as you know pretty much my duty. Aaron was as much surprised when I told him of your mode of adding \$1.50 per day as salary to the cost of boxes as I was. The 20 prct on the amt of your business pr year without expense of any kind is a clean pile & twice as much if not more than I shall clear at my present prices this year unless I increase

the business very much, which under the new arrangement I hope to do.

Colonel Andrew confided his grievances to Aaron, December 29, 1850:

My connection with Eliphalet is not without its troubles and that I anticipated before I commenced with him—I was so certain of that, that I should have preferred to have back'd out if there had been any possible way to have done so and *save my bacon* but finding no such way at hand I agreed to try it one year with him on the 20 pr cent arrangement—Well we got through the year but whether I made anything more than my living I am not able to say but believe but very little if any and now he says he has been obliged to cut down 15 pr cent in N. Y. and wants me to cut down to about 10 pr cent and now whether it is my duty to play second fiddle to him any longer for the sake of his supporting his present style of living or whether to *cut and run* entirely on my own hook is the question for me to settle—What ought I to do?

Meantime there was talk of competition from near home. The two brothers in Brunswick who had failed to buy out Colonel Andrew were taking active steps to go into the box business themselves. In order to strengthen the Dennison position against any move of this sort, E. W. urged upon his father the advantages of consolidating the factory and the selling end by moving the former from Brunswick to Roxbury.

November 14, 1850:

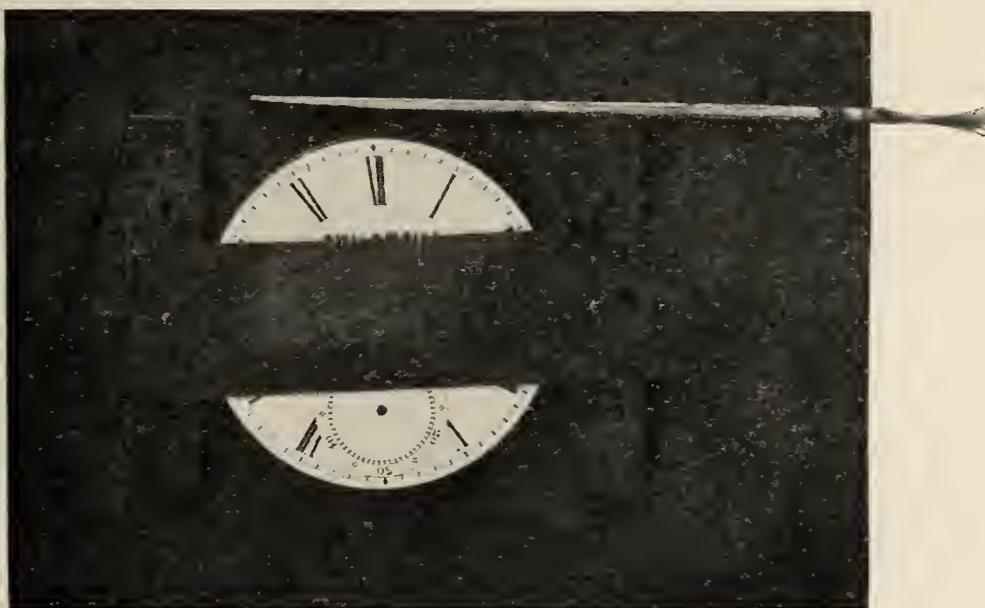
Our friend returns from N. Y. considerably elated & says he is going to make a machine that will cut twice as fast as ours. Well may be so. He got well stuffed by Shewster & other German makers.

I have one view of the subject that strikes me forcibly. That is the market is quite open now in N. Y. & it may be possible that they can compete with us as we are situated now. I had much rather make \$10,000 worth this year than 5,000 & if you take the Roxbury shop we can do it. This will put us beyond competition. . . .

In regard to the Roxbury move, I think it important & the more I think of it the more necessary it seems. In case of successful competition it will give us something to lay back upon.¹

¹Aaron had just moved into his new watch factory at Roxbury. Here again we find the accustomed attitude that Aaron could be depended upon for aid in an emergency.

There are probably \$40,000 of odd lots of boxes made about Boston and vicinity & we would certainly compete with anything that is made here & should get our share. Another thing of importance is that we can make sales MORE DIRECT & with less division of profits there putting ourselves on equal footing with others in this particular. Hoping that the contingency will not occur (still as you say it may) I should deem it necessary to prepare for it before hand. . .



AARON'S JIG FOR MARKING WATCH DIALS

To sum up these advantages I will mention those that seem strongest. 1st increase of business; 2nd, increase of profit; 3rd, saving of freight & trouble of transportation including time; 4th, reduction of stock even for increase of sales; 5th, chances of mistakes are less; to these I could string out more, like putting our goods directly into the hands from the factory without such a division of profit. More anon on this.

Colonel Andrew's remarks to Aaron on the subject of moving away from Brunswick reveal the true character of the man more than any other letter of the period.

December 29, 1850:

With respect to my removing my Factory to Roxbury I need only say that I have never entertained a serious idea that it would answer—I should be emphatically moving from home—What could I do for my ample room for all purposes; and for my cow, hens, garden, cellar and well and ice house from which we can draw all the good water we want by taking a few steps to the pump in the sink which is at all times in a temperature above 32 *farenheit* and then—when we are thirsty and want a draught a few degrees cooler we have only to hack a little ice into it & have it just as we wish—Then again the little farm on the hill where I cut hay for my cow and my 8 cords of the best of hard wood cut & split and seasoned under cover & so perfectly dry that one stick will burn free alone—And then again our convenient church to repair to on Sundays where we can be as comfortable in any weather as we can be in our own houses furnished with a good clock and Bell with other conveniences to numerous to mention.

How could I pull up stakes now at my time of life and leave all these comforts with but little if any prospect of being compensated for such a sacrifice.

I certainly must see things in a very different light before I could think of it—This being the case Eliphalet talks now & then about buying me out, but I tell him I see but a little difference between my selling or giving out as he has nothing to pay and never can have so long as he suffers his out goes to exceed his income—

Buying the business outright was indeed Eliphalet's ambition, for he was finding it impossible to get the kind of service he wanted from the factory end. It was the old, old struggle between factory and sales force, with lack of understanding on each side. But we shall see during the next five years how E. W. solved the problem—by persistently taking more and more responsibility upon himself until at length all parts of the business came under his single control.

Chapter Four

1851 - 1855

THE BUSINESS EXPANDS

New Characters Appear on the Scene

E. LAMSON PERKINS. The manufacture of boxes and jewelry cards (the latter were added to the line shortly before this time) had begun to require a large and dependable supply of cardboard. Fortunately a well-known cardboard and Bristol-board factory was located in Roxbury. This was owned by Mr. E. Lamson Perkins, with whom E. W. "struck hands in 1851 and the bonds of mutual prosperity made these two men of most opposite dispositions in many characteristics the most loyal and confidential friends in the world so long as that bond (mutual profit) was the tie."¹ The last phrase is the hint of trouble between these two which culminated nearly thirty years later in E. W.'s buying the Perkins plant outright.

HENRY HAWKS. By 1850 E. W. was already making sales trips to New York. He wrote Colonel Andrew the latter part of that year:

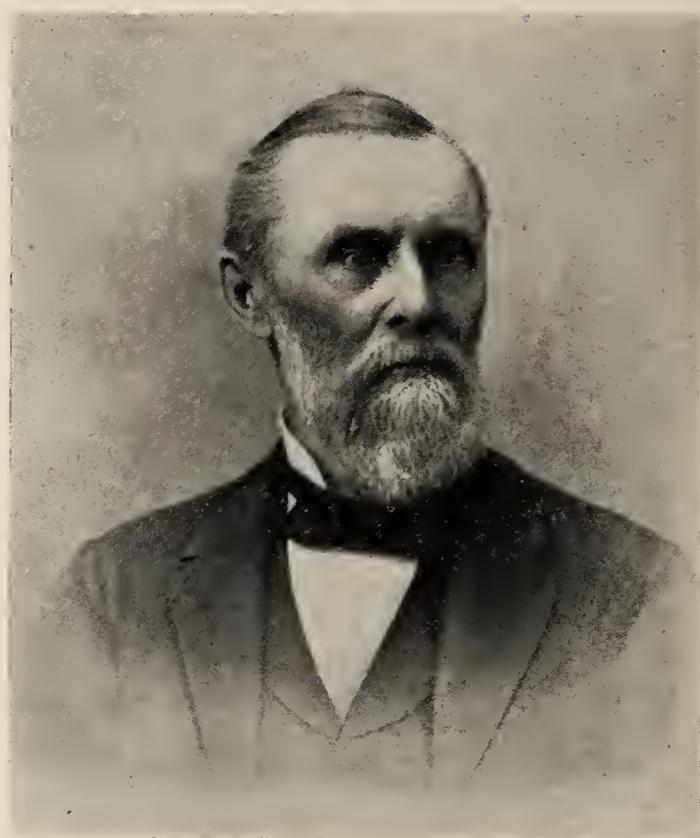
I returned from N. York this morning & although my trip was not very successful in immediate sale, yet I am pleased with the trip & the result of it, having made new customers of some of the largest & best concerns in N. York.

Among these customers was Fellows & Company, at that time leading wholesale jewelers in the country. E. W.'s custom at first was to canvass New York by monthly visits, but before long the growth of the business seemed to warrant hiring an agent to be on the spot every day. He consulted Mr. Fellows, and the latter recommended a young man in his employ for his "promptness, ability, and general intelligence." This young man, whose name was Henry

¹E. W. Dennison to C. E. Benson, December 7, 1878.

Hawks, accepted Mr. Dennison's offer and, probably in 1853,¹ became his New York agent.

ALBERT METCALF. Almost simultaneously another man destined to figure largely in the business for many years made his appearance. This man, Albert Metcalf, was thrown by pure chance into the same shop with E. W. at 203 Washington Street.² Mr. Metcalf, at the annual dinner in 1898, told how it came about:



ALBERT METCALF

My acquaintance with that remarkable man, E. W. Dennison, began in 1854, the year, as I think, of his beginning to cut and make his first jewelers' tags, say #84, 100 and 102.

¹We have always supposed the first New York office to have been opened in 1855 at 17 Maiden Lane. Recently, however, the date has been pushed back more than a year by the discovery of an E. W. Dennison billhead dated January 1, 1854, and printed with the addresses 205 Washington Street and 181 Broadway.

²Aaron's store address at which E. W. had his quarters till about 1855 was 205 Washington Street. When E. W. moved upstairs in the same building his address became 203 Washington.

I had been during the four years preceding in the employ of Harvey M. Richards, the largest manufacturer of gilt jewelry in Attleboro, if not in the country, and about the leading man in the town of Attleboro,—at least the most enterprising and progressive man in the town at that time.

His office in New York was at 173 Broadway, corner of Cord-land,¹ in which office I had been a year or so, educating to the jewelry business.

Mr. Richards had decided to open an office in Boston and Ira Richards & Co., mfrs. of gold jewelry, had also the same ambition, and they agreed to occupy an office jointly. I was to conduct the Boston office. We selected a room at 203 Washington St., corner of Bromfield, over the jewelry store of Bailey, Kettell & Chapman, the store formerly occupied by A. L. Dennison, the inventor of the American watch. For our business, we required the front of the room only and Mr. Dennison became our tenant for the rear portion of the office and also a small room in the extreme rear. Here Mr. Dennison had his small stock of boxes and for diversion had his little tag machines upon which he cut his small tags, the power used being his *foot* in one case and his hand for #100 and #102, a girl taking the tags away and stringing them in the office. Then and there I made the acquaintance of Box 41 and learned how to sell and deliver it, for when Mr. Dennison was out, as he had to be some of the time, as he had no help of any consequence, also during lunch time, when he went around the corner to Shaw's for *beans*, I had the care of his department. I could sell a 41 box and some tags, charge them on the scratch book, as he called it, and make the bill. The chief customers were Palmer & Batchelders, Jones, Ball & Co., Bigelow Brothers & Kennard, Currier & Trott, Henry Guild, C. A. W. Crosby, Sam T. Crosby, Lincoln & Foss. . . .

Mr. Dennison's business had expanded considerably during the first year. I have no recollection of the amount of his sales—probably I never knew, but I know his stock had more than doubled and he seemed to be going ahead.

Although Metcalf and E. W. Dennison occupied adjoining stores in 1854 and again in 1855, soon after this their paths separated, and it was not until seven years later that Metcalf was formally employed by Dennison.

¹Metcalf must have been here at the time the Dennison branch office was opened at 181 Broadway.



FRANKLIN STREET, BOSTON, ABOUT 1850

During this period Colonel Andrew's attention began to wander somewhat from the box business. The constant bickerings with his son and other perplexities of the enterprise were becoming wearisome.

An attempt was made in the spring of 1852 to improve matters by revising the terms of the oral agreement made when E. W. entered the business, and putting them into black and white. Colonel Andrew's wages, exclusive of profit, were limited to a dollar a day; cost charges were adjusted; the expense of freight and borrowed money was to be borne by E. W.; and his brother Benjamin was appointed arbiter of all disagreements.

Yet the Articles of Agreement made no lasting improvement in the relations of father and son. In a letter to Benjamin, May 26, 1852, E. W. defends himself for insisting that his father had overcharged him:

I do not wish you to think by this that I think he would willfully wrong me out of mine, but he has a peculiar notion of discrimination & his discriminations seem to me to be all on one side "like the handle of a jug."

Aside from these internal troubles, hard times everywhere threatened serious consequences for the young Dennison industry. Colonel Andrew's faith in the box business and the efficiency of his son was at a minimum, till at last he came to the point of selling out—and Eliphalet's great ambition was about to be fulfilled.

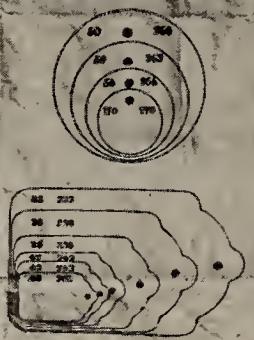
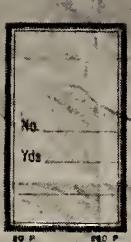
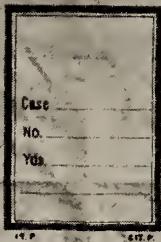
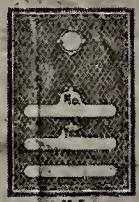
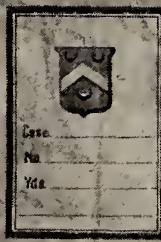
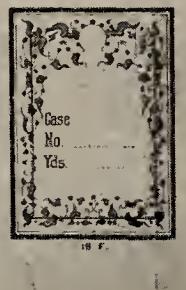
In 1853 the dauntless Colonel ran for Legislature but was defeated. Both he and Matilda then cast about for other means of support when the box business should change hands, and as always they turned to Aaron for help and advice. Matilda wrote him that she thought of learning how to make wax dolls and flowers. Colonel Andrew's ideas were less definite. On December 12, 1854, he wrote:

Yours of the 7th is before me & I hardly know what to say in regard to your suggestions

My ardor has considerably cool'd in regard to going into any new business if I should be lucky enough to get rid of the perplexities of the old one especially where it will require any out lay—My prospect of getting anything over and above my immediate wants of E. W. if sell or do not sell out to him considering the depress'd state

DENNISON'S MERCANDISE TAGS

E.W.DENNISON, Boston. H.HAWKS & CO., New York.



25	200
30	250
35	300
40	350
45	400
50	450
55	500

ONE OF THE FIRST PIECES OF DENNISON ADVERTISING—
A BROADSIDE ISSUED ABOUT 1859

of trade and the scarcity of money & his ideas of economy you know as well as myself—

I dont complain of him because I think (as economy is repudiated almost by every body) he is doing as well as others in his circumstances—I must own that I [have] some misgivings about entering upon an untried experiment at my time of life—I want repose now more than I do money

An entirely new business will of course involve me in more or less troubles & perplexities which may be better borne by a middle aged man—I have not forgotten yet how much *up hill* there was at the commencement of the box business & in fact up to this day I never have been able entirely to master them—

In fact so many of them still cling to it that I am induced to give it up at almost any sacrifice—Suffice it to say that I have never attain'd what I expected Viz. a tolerable degree of independence as I could never raise enough from the business to keep myself out of debt . . .

If I buy out Davenport as I rather expect to and furnish his box machines in connection with mine it may make me as much business as shall want to attend to without the expense of an outlay as I shall have his patterns in the trade—

I am negotiating with a man in Indianapolis Ind. to build him a machine to cut a stereotyped box at a single motion & if he accedes to my terms as I expect he will I shall have to take hold of it immediately as he is in great want of it—if I can have machine work enough to employ me about $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{2}{3}$ of the time it will be all the business I wish to confine myself to—

Inside of two months the actual sale took place and Colonel Andrew and Eliphalet both realized their desires—Colonel Andrew to be rid of the perplexities of the box business, Eliphalet to be free to manage it without dictation or hindrance from any one. E. W. eventually proved the wisdom of his ambition, but Colonel Andrew was not so fortunate. Yet it is doubtful whether any business would have been large enough to harbor both the willful Colonel and his impetuous son.

On February first, 1855, the document was drawn up and signed which gave the control of the box business into Eliphalet's hands for approximately \$8000 plus \$1000 bonus for the business. Four thousand dollars of this was listed as "Cr. by Bill rend.," probably representing receivables and the amount due

Eliphalet for commission and services. One thing Colonel Andrew kept for himself,—his patent right, dated April 15, 1851, on the Corner Cutting Machine, which he continued to manufacture occasionally in small lots.

At this point a perplexing question arises. Where did E. W. carry on the manufacturing end of his business for the next two years and who did the work? Nowhere is there any evidence of transferring a box crew to Boston, or establishing a factory in Massachusetts before 1858. But clearly neither Colonel Andrew nor Matilda continued to manufacture boxes except in a small way for Aaron's own use. Colonel Andrew in closing out his left overs wrote to Aaron, May 15, 1855:

By the way are you in want of any more Boxes of smaller sizes than the ones you had of me—If so I can furnish you with them—I have been scraping up odds and ends of former lots, not regular numbers but *betwixt* and *between*—

Aside from this reference the scanty correspondence of the period is silent on the subject of box manufacturing. Matilda was particularly hard pressed during the spring of 1855, a fact which would be hard to account for, if there had been any box manufacturing going on in Brunswick. Her skill and experience would undoubtedly have been called upon, for good box makers are not trained overnight.

Aaron as usual was consulted and seeing the possibility of profit in glass-top boxes, he started Matilda making them for sale in Boston; but some difficulty came up over collecting the first bill, and there the matter dropped. This last stroke of ill luck was almost too much for Matilda's buoyant spirit. She wrote Aaron, May 15, 1855:

I have felt so disappointed for I anticipated a nice little business and here it is summer almost and only one lot, and no returns from that . . . I have come to the conclusion that it is not right for me to do anything for I seem to be baffled in my attempts.

A week later she had better news for her brother. E. W. this time had come to her rescue:

I had a letter from E. W. this afternoon in which he offers me the Wed Cake and the 20 per cent profit, for which I am very grateful

and have written him to say I will try and do them but unless my luck turns I shall not do much. . . . E. W. remarks in his letter to Father that they all seem to blame him as regards my work.¹ I am sorry to have him feel so for I know he has done a great deal for me, and is ready to do more.



MATILDA

I know I sometimes feel a little vexed at what seems negligence of small matters, but am always sorry when I think the second time. I know he is so good hearted and jenerous, and would almost turn himself out of doors to accomodate his suffering friends.

About a month after writing this letter to Aaron, Matilda married George Swift of Brunswick. This step did not help matters, though, for Mr. Swift was an improvident artist, and Matilda found it necessary to support her husband most of the time, in addition to herself and Julia. Apparently the wedding cake boxes did not occupy much of her time, and she was eager to find more regular occupation. Although her three brothers made spasmodic efforts to help her by turning work of various kinds in her direction, and although, as she wrote

¹Here Matilda hints at something that might explain why she no longer took part in the box business, but unfortunately the correspondence does not make this point clear.

Benjamin, "I am willing to try, as I believe I always am, anything worth trying," several years of hardship lay between her and the success she finally attained, as we shall see later, in the manufacture of druggist boxes.

The fall after Matilda's marriage Colonel Andrew, no longer tied down by steady business of any kind, went with his wife¹ on a real jaunt to New York. He wrote Aaron, October 3, 1855:

I arrived in this city this morning in the New Haven Boat—Had a fine run up the sound while I was fast asleep—I have entered My Machine at the Crystal Palace² today—This is the first day of the fare but they are all in a *hub bub* not being half ready.

I have taken my journey by easy stages stopping in the principal cities on my way from Boston—

We are boarding with a widow Bartlett of Williamsburg opposite New York and verry much at home—

Two months later he wrote from Brunswick:

We arrived home a week ago last eve. in the last train and found all right but was too tired and dirty to attend meeting next day but have done so today though it has been raining all day making it very sloppy as we had about two inches of snow last night. . . .

By the way is there any opening in your Watch Co. to let in a partner of about my size—Cannot I get hold of a part of Howard & Davis's interest or a part of yours? Say by return mail—If so I might feel induced to transfer all I could command to that establishment accompanying the same with my *talants* and labor—(N. B. Keep dark on this)

The last family letter for the year throws a little light on the progress of Aaron's ambition. With his partners, he had formed the Boston Watch Company, which was beginning to turn out machine-made watches. His father, very proud of the achievement, bought one of the most expensive to show his fellow townsmen, some of whom were skeptical of Aaron's new ideas. The day before Christmas, he wrote Aaron:

¹By a second marriage. His first wife had died not long after the beginning of the box business.

²Probably an exhibition hall in New York modeled after the Crystal Palace erected in Hyde Park, London, for the World Exhibit in 1851.

I had occasion a few days since to open the new gold watch to alter her time a little since which I have not been able to shut her up again and am obliged ever since to keep her under a *bushell* for fear that it might be thout that things do not always go right even with the Boston Watch Co.—

I presume Matilda and Sis is with you yet and with the rest of you enjoying your selves with the antisipation of a *merry Christmas*—I hope you will not be disappointed—

So used were the Dennison family to disappointment that they could hardly anticipate a Merry Christmas without misgivings. But E. W. had no such fears for the box business. His hands were free now, and "Lady Luck" could not frown forever.

Chapter Five

1855 - 1863

Aaron's "Baby" Grows into Dennison & Co.

FROM the time E. W. became sole owner of the jewelry box business in 1855, it began to assume a new aspect. When Aaron first conceived it, the business had been subordinate to the interests of the Dennison family and had been made to serve the needs of Colonel Andrew, Matilda, and Eliphalet in turn. Now, however, it began demanding attention for its own sake rather than solely for its benefit to the Dennisons. Business men outside the family were being employed, and the very important step of opening an office in New York had already been taken. The fact that E. W. took this step on his own judgment, when Colonel Andrew was still nominally in control, shows that the latter's place of authority was being usurped by his energetic purchasing agent and salesman.

Even before E. W. entered the business, the line had begun to broaden. In 1848 jewelry trays were made, and specimen boxes and trays for a Professor Cleveland, probably of Bowdoin. When Eliphalet became his father's salesman, he was constantly on the alert for other items beside jewelry boxes which might appeal to his class of customers. By 1851 various kinds of boxes had been introduced to meet demands as they arose,—paper packing boxes, boxes for combs, keys, chains, "specticals," pencils, hairpins, plaster, flowers, soda, and needles; also mailing, hinge, holiday, and wedding cake boxes. E. W. added jewelry cards, cut from Bristol board, between 1848 and 1850, and shortly afterward began handling plain Bristol board in quantities, and fine white and pink cotton for jewelers; by 1855 he was selling jewelers' tissue paper.

In 1850, quite by chance as we shall see,¹ came the most important addition —jewelers' tags. These small marking tags, died out from parchment and

¹Page 57.

BOSTON HARBOR FROM FORT HILL, 1854

Reproduced from a painting by John W. A. Scott



strung with silk, are significant as being the forerunner of the marking and shipping tag lines, which were soon destined to play a major part in the dramatic growth of the business. Before tracing the development of the tag, let us see what was happening to the box business proper.

At this point, the harassed historian feels like saying, "Where, O where, has my box factory gone?" We know that Eliphalet bought out his father in 1855, and that Colonel Andrew and Matilda were both looking for new means of livelihood when the purchase was imminent. Subsequently, their letters mention various occupations, but not a hint of box making. Colonel Andrew was so busy making box machines that he could not get away to visit Aaron even for a day. Matilda was spending part of her time getting E. W.'s jewelry tags strung, but did not think his tag business would amount to much, and was anxious to find something else.

But if no box manufacturing was being done in Brunswick, then where was it? E. W. did not lease his box factory in Newtonville till sometime after the first of 1858. The three intervening years are more or less a blank. It is hardly probable that the work was done in E. W.'s Boston office, for according to Albert Metcalf, his quarters at 203 Washington Street had barely room enough for one tag machine and a girl for stringing the tags. It is possible, however, that he hired space near by for a temporary factory till the move to Newtonville in 1858.

Wherever the box factory was between 1855 and 1857, we know that these years were critical for the business. The panic of 1857 and the following depression was a distressing period for young industries all over the country. Aaron's watch business, the Boston Watch Company, went on the rocks and had to be reorganized, but E. W. Dennison, though sorely in need of capital, muddled through somehow.

The latter part of the 'Fifties marked two events of great importance. The success of the jewelry tag line, which E. W. happened upon in 1850,¹ led him in 1858 to launch other merchandise tags. The first year he gave away as many tags from 43 size upward as he sold. His persistence in combating the short-sighted economy of shopkeepers who used home-made tags won over a few woolen dealers first and gradually got him a footing with other trades, until finally the merchandise and marking tag line became a sizable part of the business.

¹Page 57.

The second event occurred in 1859. In that year an addition was made to the New York office force which, though unimportant at the time, was destined to have tremendous significance. The story is told that the office boy was sick during the summer and his younger brother went in to hold the job. As the



MERCHANDISE TAG, 1865

older one never recovered, the younger one remained. His name was Harry K. Dyer. As years went on, a very deep attachment sprang up between this boy and E. W. Dennison. There was a dynamic force in Dyer which pushed him

ahead of his fellow workers, and after a rise to power like that of an Alger hero, he became president in 1892, and served for fourteen years.

In 1898 at the Annual Stockholders' Banquet, Albert Metcalf made some humorous remarks on the subject of Dyer's early days at the New York store:

He entered the employ Sept. 1859, at one dollar per week, serving three years at this same price. It may seem strange that Mr. Hawks should not have increased his pay after the first year to \$1.50 and again at the end of the second year to \$2.00, or something that sort, but one of our honored stockholders, pretty well up in the history of the concern, assures me that even the dollar was more than the boy earned; they used to get out a circular occasionally and it was Dyer's duty to distribute this circular about town among the trade. It leaked out that to get rid of the papers he would stuff them into the catch basins of the sewers, in room of carrying them among the jewelers.

. . . If the charge is true, no wonder we have not got on better. The greater wonder is that we have anything left. Early habits of young men have often brought confusion to houses stronger than this has ever been. It simply shows that some of our boys have been made of good stuff.

Metcalf himself had had various adventures during these years before 1862, when he definitely became connected with the business. In 1898 he looked back upon these days:

With 1856, my connection with the jewelry trade ended. After a year or so, during which I visited different parts of the country, I made a partnership for importation and jobbing of woolens and tailors' trimmings. This was continued a few years with rather unfavorable results, during which time I frequently met Mr. Dennison, and he would always remark that my place was with him, but I didn't realize it as he seemed to. I couldn't see any special signs of prosperity about his place and some whom I met spoke unkindly of him and his business prospects—notably one Lloyd, an old accountant by profession, who came in occasionally to write up Mr. Dennison's books. Lloyd did not accuse Mr. Dennison of dishonesty but mainly of dreadful carelessness and of being incompetent to do business. I guess Mr. Dennison had a way of his own and would not follow Lloyd's way, so did not gain his friendship. Probably I was more or less influenced by this man's opinion, so was less inclined to make a change in my busi-

ness. However, although I may have doubted Mr. Dennison's methods and thus, in a way, mentally questioned his final success in business, my regard for him continued, as I have said. There was always something about E. W. Dennison which inspired me with confidence in his integrity and manliness. I afterward came to know that I was not alone in this feeling of love and confidence . . .

During the summer of 1862 I was mostly on my father's farm in Wrentham, but my love for farming was not intense. I had followed the occupation til I was 21 and got very sick of it, so I was very ready to answer a call from Mr. Dennison early in the Autumn to come to Boston and see him. The result was that I soon began work for him with compensation not named but with request to draw what I needed to live on. My expenses called for \$7.50 per week and this was the sum I drew and charged to myself, for I was cashier, book-keeper and salesman.

It is perfectly evident that although E. W.'s business *principles* were well above the standard of the times, his methods were open to criticism. Like Aaron's, they were as "scattering as the maples on Brunswick plains." Metcalf was not a man of remarkable ability in any line, but he was excellent on detail. William Nye, for many years in the tag department, says that not until Metcalf came and took charge of detail was there any order in the finances. E. W. himself once said to a friend, "If the fishing is good and some notes are falling due, I go fishing and let Albert take care of the notes."¹

This willingness on the part of E. W. to let Metcalf handle the finances and the latter's natural bent in that direction gave him a position of influence in the business which paved the way to his becoming treasurer in 1878.

The growth of the business in New Jersey and Pennsylvania and also probably the receipt of government contracts at the beginning of the Civil War caused E. W. to open a second branch office, in Philadelphia, the latter part of 1862. Similar growth caused him early in 1863 to move the New York store to better quarters at 198 Broadway, where it remained for nearly forty years.

Fred Goodwin, who for some time had been at the New York office, was detailed to start the Philadelphia branch. He opened a small back room on the second floor at 33 South Third Street. The value of his stock at first amounted

¹*Recollections*, 1921.

to only \$500. The first E. W. Dennison letter we have for this whole period is one of instructions to the new agent.

E. W. to Fred Goodwin, April 8, 1863:

Your samples (full) you will find $\frac{1}{2}$ doz. of in case with goods of enclosed invoice. In passing these around be particular in making parties understand the qualities, as in case of square tags there are two numbers on each sample,—thus No. 5 and 205. Also talk up the 300^s as very cheap for quality.

With this full sample I would advise a general canvass of the whole trade. I mean for you to make a call on every consumer in Phila., as you could by taking an hour morning and afternoon.¹

If you meet with indifferent success in selling, it will serve to educate the trade and let them know what Tags are. Take samples to show strung, in which case it will be well to have your samples ready strung with soft string, as a hard twine is liable to cut its way through much easier than a soft one. In some cases it will be policy to give parties that persist in cutting their own tags a package of 500 if unstrung and a few 100^s assorted of the cheap string. Of course you will use your judgment as to whether their trade will pay the sacrifice. Surely your party that sells to cloth finishers cannot object to a full sample card, as he will sell the more by it. If you have not enough samples please write for more, also for tags to complete your assortment.

We are now upon a traveling sample that will comprise our whole assortment and be very complete, compact and neat. If you can put these out, it will be a good thing. Almost every class of jobbers send out travellers.

This week we bring out a new and superior stock of photo cards. They will be much the best plain card in the market. Should only try the consumers in your market on this article. Will send samples, some of your best artists will buy them.

Our Direction Label still hangs fire at patent office but I do not despair getting it through. When this does come, it will add much to your trade.

Keep a stiff upper lip and stirring around.

Give the market a fair trial and then if it don't go we will see what next can be done.

¹Note this early resort to the consumer canvass, a method E. W. was also beginning to use in New York.



FRANKLIN STREET NEAR OUR PRESENT BOSTON STORE ABOUT 1862

The "Direction Label" hanging fire at the patent office was none other than the new shipping tag with paper patch, destined to transform E. W.'s little business, still struggling for a secure foothold, into a substantial and profitable concern. William Nye, in his *Recollections*, describes the shipping tag situation as it was in the late 'Fifties:

Mr. E. W. Dennison's early efforts at merchandising were, as has been seen, simply on the order of undertaking the manufacture of improved grades of certain items of merchandise already in use and in urgent demand. . . .

Direction labels or shipping tags were sold by Mr. Dennison for some time before he undertook their manufacture. Two kinds of shipping tags were then in use, a rough manila paper eyeletted tag and a linen eyeletted tag, imported by Victor Mauger of New York. Mr. Dennison purchased both kinds of shipping tags, eyeletted them with a simple eyeletting machine, then commonly used by manufacturers of corsets and shoes, and sold them along with his other items of merchandise.

By 1862 a series of chance incidents had induced E. W. to secure the Boston agency for Victor Mauger, and soon afterward to buy him out altogether. Many years afterward in a letter written from London to the home office,¹ E. W. tells how unknowingly he was led into the tag business:

The thought just occurs to me that had not the Jew house Josephi been stuck on a lot of silk string Jewellers Tags, what might have been the case with us, or anybody else in reference to that special industry today.

We should scarcely thought of undertaking to make these goods in the face of the French parchment goods that could be imported for about what I paid Mrs. Lothrop for tying them (25c) and certainly if not we who else would.

If we had not been forced into this who would, and if we had not what reason have we to think we should have ever had our attention attracted to shipping Tags enough to ask Mauger for his agency in Boston, and thus have it attached to our brain like a fungus as all

¹February 22, 1885.

succeeding Tag folks have. . . . Now suppose we had not bartered for the Josephi Tags what reason is there to believe that the whole business in our country might not today be in the same condition that it is here. Of course Mauger's love of gain would have soon brought in some kind of competition, probably first some stationer or printer and then another, and perhaps all of the hundred or more aspirants for the Tag business might have done the same, but soon every local trade center of 50,000 or more people, would have had its home one or more Tag makers, and as for Mdse Tags no doubt they would have been imported from France and Germany today and 369 be the biggest—None were made larger than this except by us until the French copied our 42 size—The growth of this business I really look upon as partially from the fact that they were prominently advertised by imprint without cost—For the Mdse Tags had not amounted to much until the shipping Tags were well into use, and the name of Dennison was almost ubiquitous and this influence of the trade in mdse Tags extended to all lines, inasmuch as Dennison like Day & Martin on goods meant something familiar.

With the approach of Civil War the shipping tag business assumed a new aspect. The price of imported linen tags became prohibitive, and metal eyelets rose to forty cents per thousand. Besides, these eyelets pulled out of the cheap paper tags which American manufacturers were substituting for cloth. Paper tags without the eyelet were tried, but often tore away from the string and were lost.

Business assumed abnormal proportions, especially in transportation, and the demand for shipping tags was enormous. E. W. now for the first time saw before him the path to fortune, if only he could supply this huge demand with the right tag. The first step was to buy out Victor Mauger, for whom he had been acting as Boston agent since 1862. This he did, paying a good-will bonus of \$10,000. Commenting on it years afterward, he said, "It was a bold push. . . but I consider if I ever used good judgment it was then." The next step, since imported tags had gone up out of sight, was to turn out a satisfactory home product. As a substitute for linen he thought of using leather, but that for several reasons was impractical. He then put the problem of strengthening the paper tag up to his helpers, and shortly William Stratton, his merchandise tag

designer, devised a gummed washer to reinforce the hole. This simple but very practical device has scarcely been improved upon to the present time.

E. W. lost no time in getting the device patented. The patent was granted on June 9, 1863, and the new tag, when once established, was so well received that during the life of the patent it held a practical monopoly among all high grade buyers. At last the business began to gather a surplus, with which E. W. and his "boys" laid the foundations for the company as it is today. Just as mighty oaks from little acorns grow, so we, as it were, trace our lineage to the paper patch.

Before profits began to come in from the patent shipping tag, E. W. found himself sorely in need of more capital. Perhaps some notes to Victor Mauger were falling due, or others equally urgent.

Albert Metcalf in 1898 says:

One day, Mr. Dennison addressed me, "Metcalf, how much money can you raise?" I said, "Well, I guess about \$5000." "Well," he said, "for God's sake, get it together. I want you to come into the concern and we will call it anything you say." I told him I was not particular that my name should appear, so we made no change in name but I became partner in the firm of Dennison & Co., same as it was reading in New York, Henry Hawks being the Company, the New York office being then at 17 Maiden Lane.

The partnership with Henry Hawks in New York is problematical. Besides this reference of Metcalf's, there are one or two other indications that such a partnership had been formed. An account of stock drawn up by one Mr. Hyde for Aaron on the thirtieth of November, 1857, lists goods bought of "Dennison & Co., 17 Maiden Lane." In an account of the Philadelphia store beginnings given in 1898, Mr. Gilbert says, "The office was started by EWD alone, although the signs read, 'Dennison & Company.' " Possibly that is the explanation of what happened in New York. At any rate no written agreement between Hawks and E. W. has been found.

The first partnership paper we have is drawn up in Albert Metcalf's handwriting on May 1, 1863:

BOSTON, MAY 1ST, 1863.

The undersigned this day agree to a Copartnership, on the following named conditions.

- 1st Firm name to be. Dennison & Co.
- 2 Term of Copartnership:—Three years.
- 3 Division of Profits—Viz
E. W. Dennison is to have five twelfths
Henry Hawks is to have three twelfths
Albert Metcalf two twelfths
Wm. B. Spear¹ two twelfths.
- 4th This fourth article is stricken out by agreement.
- 5th Henry Hawks shall receive from the firm the sum of Five Hundred Dollars per Annum as a salary, in addition to his share of profits.
- 6th Drafts for personal expenses.—
Each partner may draw the following named sums each year exclusive of interest on his capital, and no more, unless by consent of all the other partners.
E. W. Dennison—Thirty six Hundred Dollars.
Henry Hawks—Fifteen Hundred Dollars.
Wm. B. Spear—Twelve Hundred Dollars.
Albert Metcalf—Twelve Hundred Dollars.
- 7th Neither Partner shall use the name of the firm or his individual name, as indorser or surety for another party without the consent in writing of all the other partners.

(Signed) E. W. DENNISON
HENRY HAWKS
ALBERT METCALF
WM. B. SPEAR

This partnership marks the coming of age of Aaron's "baby," not far from twenty-one years after its unexplained appearance in 1844. The testing time was now over. The next few years tell a story of swift expansion such as Aaron had not dreamed of, but which E. W. with his energy and his optimism brought to pass.

¹Foreman of the Newtonville box plant.

Chapter Six

1863 - 1869

THE FIRST SURPLUS

DURING the years 1863-69, several factors operated to bring about an increase in the assets of Dennison & Co. far in excess of mere wartime inflation, and for the first time E. W. was able to meet his liabilities by something more than the "skin of his teeth."

When he formed his first partnership on May 1, 1863, the total investment of the Company in round numbers was \$22,000, distributed as follows:

E. W. Dennison.....	\$15,000
Albert Metcalf.....	4,000
Henry Hawks.....	2,000
W. B. Spear.....	1,600

Two years later Spear withdrew from the firm to seek his fortune in the West, and received for his original investment \$7,400 in notes, a yield of well over three hundred per cent. Credits to the account of the other partners during these years tell the same story of rapidly increasing returns:

	Feb. 1, 1865	May 1, 1866
E. W. Dennison.....	\$26,000	\$50,000
Henry Hawks.....	11,000	30,000
Albert Metcalf	10,000	23,000

By 1866, therefore, the whole amount was over \$100,000. In other words, during the ten years since E. W. bought out his father, the total capital of the business had multiplied ten times, yet he had accomplished this feat in spite of having to operate practically without cash.

Though the increase in resources was due, as we said, to several factors, its immediate cause was the new tag patch, patented one month after the formation of Dennison & Co. in May, 1863. The patent tag at first was expensive, owing to high cost of stock, and small output from the one crude machine then in use. But by means of vigorous campaigning, door-to-door canvass, and liberal advertising, ten million were sold the first year.

The use of shipping tags by consumers for advertising purposes—an idea which was not exploited until about 1900—was recognized as early as 1863. A Dennison newspaper advertisement which appeared in that year read, "The system of directing Packages by a strong label,¹ with the name and business of the party sending printed in bold handsome style is an excellent advertising medium, and is becoming quite universal."

As improved methods lessened the cost of production and high-grade buyers became thoroughly educated to the new patch, tag sales increased rapidly and profits from this item gave E. W. the means for still further expansion. His business had reached that stage where, like a snowball rolling down hill, it grew larger at each revolution.

Another factor in this growth, and one which can hardly be overemphasized, was the advertising value to Dennison & Co. of the patch imprint, which carried the Dennison name to all corners of the business world. Moreover, it must be remembered that if Dennison & Co. prospered at this time, it was not alone in its success. A wave of wartime expansion had caught all Northern industry on its crest and was carrying it along almost in spite of itself.

One of the most interesting things to observe during this decisive period in our history is that the tag patch was not in itself the beginning of a new era, but only part of the whole train of forces that put Dennison & Co. on its feet. E. W. seems to have been preparing the way for this new device even before it emerged from the recesses of William Stratton's brain in the latter part of '62.

As early as 1861 he leased the whole of Julian Hall in the block where the Boston Post Office now stands, subletting the lower apartments and fitting up the rest for his office and workrooms. This in itself was a courageous move for a man practically without capital. But it gave him for the first time something like adequate headquarters in which to enlarge his facilities, and organize them

¹Shipping tags were still called direction labels.

to better advantage. Here a printing press was added to the mechanical equipment; shortly a lithograph room and repair shop were established; and Metcalf was hired as E. W.'s general assistant.

He had likewise been establishing himself in the shipping tag business and preparing to get his share of profits from the growing demand for this item brought on by the war. It was while doing this that his realization of the need for a better tag called forth the new device. The patch, then, was not the genesis of all things for Dennison & Co., but grew out of forces already at work, and, *in connection* with them, was a large factor in the future growth of the concern.

As a part of the general expansion brought about by all these causes, during 1863 the Philadelphia branch was established and also enlarged New York headquarters at 198 Broadway.

In this same year Brunswick reappeared as a manufacturing base, and Matilda Swift was finally started on a competent livelihood. For some time she had been keeping a boarding house in Newtonville, but with rates at \$2.25 per week, she was not making much profit. On November 29 in a letter to Benjamin thanking him for his "many kindnesses" to her, she wrote:

I know it would be agreeable to you all for me to be indipendantly settled in business, but I either lack ability or the fates are against my being so situated, though may be some time I shall be, the tables may turn in my favor.

Very shortly they did turn, for E. W. gave her the J. I. Brown troche boxes¹ to manufacture on a salary-and-commission basis. She set up a shop under her own name in the Day Block, Brunswick, and as "Aunt Swift" became a prominent figure in the town.

This step was the beginning of a gradual shift of Dennison box manufacturing back to the town where it started. The cutting room in Brunswick was put in charge of Algernon Hinkson, who had returned in ill health from the war. Then once more history repeated itself. Just as he had become Colonel Andrew's mainstay and married his daughter Julia, so a boy by the name of Frank Chandler happened along, became Algernon's assistant, and married his daughter, Ann Julia. Hinkson died about a year after young Chandler came

¹E. W. had taken a contract to supply this concern with boxes for their products.

A RECENT PICTURE OF THE DAY BLOCK, BRUNSWICK
THE DATE ON THE BUILDING IS 1837



there to work, but not before he had instructed the boy in cutting and especially in the use of Colonel Andrew's box machine. Incidentally, in his *Recollections*, Chandler tells how another boy tried to cheat him out of the job when he first applied, and got well "licked" for his pains.

In 1865 came an addition to the line of Dennison products which proved of great significance. Gum labels, because so commonly used for marking goods, had been handled by E. W. in connection with merchandise tags, but were imported from Dondorf, a German manufacturer. The high price of imported goods during the war, however, affected labels as well as shipping tags, and E. W. was forced to find an American supplier. He bought first of a New York manufacturer, but the goods were so poor that about 1865 he began buying gummed paper and manufacturing the labels himself.¹ They were designed by William Stratton, who copied largely from Dondorf, and for years were known as Stratton's Gum Labels. From these grew a line of related items, first as outside purchases and later as Dennison products—the most important of which was gummed paper.

E. W. was now beginning to feel himself well established as the head of a successful business. On the third of November, 1866, he wrote Benjamin:

Notwithstanding that there is a general complaint of want of business about us we continue to increase our manufactures and Sales at an astonishing rate and our present Employees have a fair show for future prosperity with us if they please to avail themselves of it—

This regard for the future of his employees is a trait worth noticing in E. W.'s character, for it grew with the years and is even now bearing fruit.

Quite naturally in the train of such general expansion, the principal partner of Dennison & Co. began to turn his thoughts abroad. Aaron had already "crossed the pond" several times in behalf of his watch-making project, and in 1867 was settled at Zurich. Late in that year E. W. visited his brother, called on the Dondorfs at Frankfurt, established one or two other connections, and in his usual inquiring way looked about Europe to see what he could find.

The ideas he brought back from this trip gave a new impetus to the box line, which with the rapid growth of shipping and marking tags, had been

¹H. K. Dyer to Albert Metcalf, December 5, 1904.

allowed to take second place. E. W. not only began importing Morocco ring and thimble boxes from Birmingham, England,¹ but established a plant in Brunswick for the manufacture of fine paper boxes, with his nephew, Benjamin Lithgow Dennison, in charge.

This Brunswick plant was important because it committed Dennison & Co. publicly to the manufacture of quality goods and marked the beginning of an upward tendency, one evidence of which was the die stamping of fine boxes. Very probably it was the surplus built up from the other lines of the business which made this uplift in the box line possible. The principle of die stamping box tops, which greatly increased their advertising value, was eventually—though not till after 1900—applied to shipping tags and other Dennison products.

With the establishment of the new Brunswick factory, the Newtonville plant was closed and the paper box work moved first to Newton Corner and then to E. W.'s Boston headquarters.

Among the employees drawn into Dennison & Co. during this period of expansion are several well-known names,—Charles Benson, Frank Talbot, Preston Pond, and C. A. Sanders, all of whom rose to important positions. Likewise, Henry B. Dennison was coming of age and starting his career in the Boston office.

On February 12, 1868, E. W. wrote Aaron:

I have a sudden call West and shall leave home tomorrow—
Have a couple of lame ducks, one in Chicago and one in Cin^a.

S. S. Miller & Co. of Chicago at this time was E. W.'s chief agent for that section, but as their methods did not meet his approval, he lost no time in deciding to buy the company out and set up a Chicago store where Dennison goods could be sold under his own name. Frank Talbot writes in his *Recollections*:

Mr. E. W. Dennison had a hobby at that time, a plan for a chain of stores at strategic points, which stores should enable the Company to serve its patrons more efficiently. It was an ideal of Mr. E. W. Dennison's to give the customer the best service possible. Quality and Service were his watchwords.

¹Some velvet-lined Morocco boxes were made at Newtonville as early as 1850, according to Veranus Wentworth's *Recollections*.

It must be admitted that E. W. did not always use impeccable judgment in choosing men to hold responsibility. Something might be said against his delegating H. B. Dennison, when only twenty-two years old, to open this new branch in what was then practically the frontier of American industry. But such was the case. Mr. Talbot's 1898 *Sketch* of the Chicago store tells us in his inimitable way the story of this venture.

I had been in the employ of Dennison & Co. only a year when we bought out S. S. Miller & Co., opened a store in Chicago at 88 Lake St., and in August, 1868, Henry B. Dennison, then a beardless youth, bade us all good bye, and started for the west to dress the young infant and teach it to stand alone. . . . It was evident that Henry did not like the Young City, destined to be a wonder to the world. At that time Chicago was a city of 297,000 inhabitants, and less than Forty years old. Boston, the proud old city-home with all its love and fascinations—friends who were legion—all united to draw him Eastward, and in December 1868, Chas. E. Benson, then traveling principally through the New England States selling Woolen Tags, was sent to relieve him.

Henry returned, and reported at the old store, 66 Milk St. the day after Christmas. He returned to us with a luxuriant growth of blonde whiskers, and it was then I was first impressed with the "Push" of the famed City. Not only was business on the "go," but Henry's appearance gave me to understand that "Nature" was in the "push" also—and I got the impression that Chicago was the Veritable home of Esau.

In the summer of 1869 young Talbot was asked if he would go out and assist Mr. Benson. The 1898 *Sketch* continues:

I had never been away from home—I loved the old place—but I thought of the land stretching out toward the setting sun—the Whiskers



H. B. D. AT TWENTY-TWO

waiting for me—and I said, Yes. September 14th, 1869, I packed a little, black trunk with one suit of clothes, a few paper collars—a bible, and started West. . . . I reached Chicago on the 16th of September, 1869. It was on the morning of that day I reported to Mr. Benson, and began my career, that good Mr. Dennison said would bring me a pair of Blacks inside of five years.

The store, as near as I can recollect it, was doing a business at that time of about Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars a year.

Thus we find Dennison & Co., fortified for the first time with a surplus beyond its daily needs, reaching out for new and better products and larger fields in which to market them.

Side by side with the development of his business, E. W.'s character had been undergoing a gradual change. No sketch of him would be complete without mention of a letter he wrote his wife on the nineteenth of February, 1865. It reveals at bottom the same personality as that of the impatient young man dictating to his father fifteen years before, but more controlled now, and mellowed by a growing kindness.

This (Sunday) brings to me the full force of a home "Without a Wife."

Surrounded as I am with all of the Cares and pleasures of business during the week I have only the lonely nights to pass as with my facilities and temperament I can worry through the Evenings as I do often When you are at home—but Come Sunday I am alone indeed—

When I Cast my Eye back on the past Years of almost perfect concord that we have passed together I almost Wonder that Providence Should have bestowed upon me So good a Companion as it has. One Who can bear with my Rough and tough bearish and uncultivated disposition as you have—How true the Saying of the Lamented "Theodore"¹ that in ten years Married We are ten times as much Married as in one"—

How true this has prooved in our case Had we Known Each other as Well "then" as now how different "then" would have been from What it was—Yet how different "then" Would have been and now too if "you" had not been "you"—

¹Theodore Parker, a clergyman and intimate friend of the Dennisons.



MRS. DENNISON ABOUT 1884

How often I have Wished you had a little more nonsense about you yet how much I hate nonsense in others while I have so much of it myself. We have assimilated to all Else than this with Each other Wonderfully. If I had any good points you have very quickly adopted them and I on my part almost worship your perfections that in many thing almost Seem to approach the heavenly.

If I ever gave you pain it rebounded upon me with three fold force. And now in this 22^d year of our growing Love in my thoughtful moments I look back to our planting time and Shudder to think how I neglected the tender plant of love when it was putting forth its first Shoots and wonder that it was not blasted and withered beyond the power of growth. Thank God We were Spared this. Even then I had some good in me and of this you must have got occasional glimpses of Sunshine and showers to Keep the plant in feeble growth. It grew to a firm and Strong healthy tree and now we are gathering the rich ripe fruit. How much it has influenced of our health I Know not but I Suspect much. It has helped to bring a peaceful mind and the Mind We Know Acts much upon the body.

Now as We are going down this vale we can all the better appreciate the value to our happiness of this ripe fruit. Many I fear Start with full growth tree & ripe fruit and by neglect the tree does not thrive and the fruit on the wane of life becomes tasteless, let us be thankful that this is not our case.

Now we have precious charges in our Care whose future happiness depends Much upon what we transmit to them and as we Know love to be the truest happiness in this and the life to come let us by Example Which they So readily immitate convey to them little by little true love. If We Can leave off harsh language and use instead of it a firm tone and Endeavor to have the same course pursued by them in their mutual Contact we can leave them with a better heritage than Money. If we could induce them to take as Much pains to please us and Each other as they would to favorably impress others it would be a great Step gained.

My hope is to act as here written and when you see me departing from this a look from you will be Sufficient to check me.

I have always had a theory that perfect conjugal Love could not Exist Except under our now Existing life, that we Should agree in *all* things. Herein good health is a requisite.—and to this is perhaps in some measure our more vigorous growth of love due of late—

So far as we have got in our ac't of Stock it shows our firm Even more prosperous than I anticipated—Should the next 2 Years Show as marked progress it would not be So far out of the Way to Call us rich as my figures would not fall much short of 100,000\$—from 35 to 40,000 would not be much out of the way now Showing that in the last 20 months I have made from 18 to 23,000\$ for my Share—This of Course is some inflated but not Much as We did not take Stock at full value—

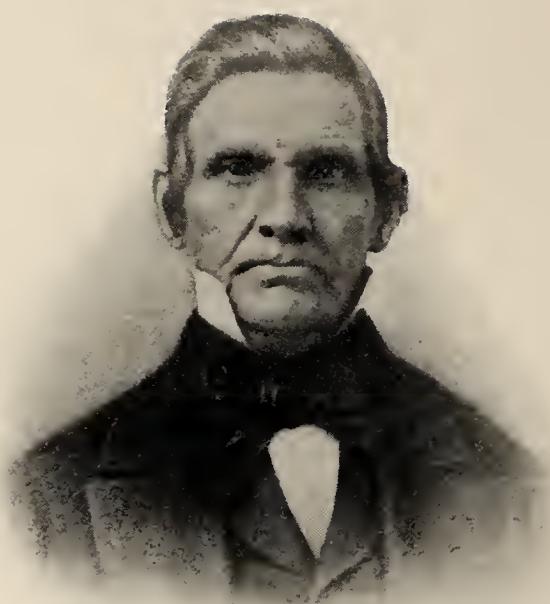
This is aside from my Expenses—Knowing that this would please you I have told you of it.

.

During all this time, what had the good old Colonel been doing while his son was making a fortune at the business he himself had once controlled? It was not possible for such a man to settle down into the tranquil peace of old age. If anything, his restlessness seemed to increase, aggravated no doubt by the fact that his second wife was not proving an unmixed blessing. Not a word of complaint on this score do we find in any of Colonel Andrew's letters, but according to E. W., life with her was so unbearable, aside from "the homeopathic doses of 'Sunshine' he gets occasional glimpses of" that "we can hardly Expect that he will Ever See much happiness this side of Heaven." Indeed, many family councils were held among the three sons on the subject of what to do with Father.

Having invested most of his money in Aaron's watch business, with no dividends forthcoming, he found himself still hard pressed to get a living. It was decided that during the winter of 1862 he should visit his sons in Boston, and look after what job box work E. W. could turn in his direction. But he was not contented there, and soon returned to Maine. December of 1863 found him in Waterville, where he may have been doing some machine repair work. Three days after Christmas he dispatched a most characteristic letter to Eliphalet:

If I get an answer to this by return Mail *well and good*; but if not it is the last *scratch of a pen* you will ever receive from me—I mailed a letter to you on monday 21st requesting an immediate answer and have had the P. Office here under *regular seige* ever since to no purpose—The question I now propound is did or did you not receive that letter



COLONEL ANDREW DENNISON

P. S. The older I grow the more indignant I feel at unnecessary delays—Let any man of my age (of good temper) at this season of the year and half sick stand Sentinel of a 7 by 9 P. Office 1½ miles from his boarding house for a whole week and get nothing dont you think he would feel a little Woolfish by that time?

Whatever the cause of this particular outburst, one cannot escape the fact that E. W. was exasperatingly careless about attending to detail. There seemed also to have been a natural antagonism between the two men, arising from the very similarity of their characters. Each pursued a bargain with such true Yankee zest that whenever anything like a financial settlement came up between them, sparks began to fly. The fact that they were father and son, instead of smoothing the way, only added bitterness to the disagreement. For while each became a hard-headed business man in dealing with the other, he felt, nevertheless, that the family bond entitled *him* to special treatment. Colonel Andrew seemed always anxious for a little more than his due, and Eliphalet, though resolved to be fair, did not intend to be imposed upon or wheedled into generosity.

The trouble they had over dividing the profit and expense of the box business repeated itself fifteen years later when E. W. manufactured and sold a few of his father's box machines, allowing him, by agreement, ten dollars royalty for the use of the patterns. On February 20, 1867, in writing for the royalty due on four machines, Colonel Andrew added naïvely:

Considering all the circumstances in the case don't you think you could afford to send me a check for 100 instead of 40 and make a good thing of it at that—

I should have been 1500 dollars better off if I had been able to have done as much as you have at the business—if you think you ought not to do it as a matter of right I would not object to receiving it on the score of gratuity—I have no particular fancy about the name of an act the substance is what most concerns me—

At the close of this letter is one of those unconsciously humorous remarks which so often adorn the path of human intercourse: *Mother joins in sending love to all!*

The hundred dollars was not forthcoming, and it was many months before the old Colonel could even get a statement of account from his son. When it finally came, E. W. had charged him for freight, cartage, and commissions. The latter, you may be sure, lost no time in replying.

September 23, 1868:

You state that I will see by the enclosed account that you have charged me with 10 pr cent for selling the machines and ask if that will be satisfactory to me to which I answer it will not—I never agreed to pay any commissions on the sales—The bargain was that I was to furnish patterns and you was to pay me a royalty of 10 dollars for every machine made and sold—

I should soon *be out of the little end of the horn*—Only think of my paying 10 pr cent commissions on sales made by your agents—

The mackerel would soon eat up the cod if many were sold by agents—Every 125 dollar machine sold would eat up my Royalty and 2.50 besides—It makes me think of the *poor frog getting out of the well.*

With disputes of this kind always imminent, it is no wonder that these two could not remain closely associated in business. Nor is it surprising that the younger and more energetic of the two should have forced his father first out of the box business, and later into a subordinate position in the manufacture of his box machine.

Yet in all matters except business, relations between father and son were more cordial. Aaron had been his father's aid and adviser from the time he was fifteen, and naturally occupied a large place in his father's heart. But Colonel Andrew always followed with keen interest the progress of his younger son. E. W., on his side, beneath his apparent hardness, felt a great deal of affection and even admiration for his father.

After the latter's eighty-second birthday celebration in February, 1868, E. W. wrote Aaron, "I am rejoiced to be able to say that father is quite himself, and you can be sure that I enjoyed myself exceedingly with him."

On July third of the following year Colonel Andrew died. Never having reached what is known as success, his true claims to distinction have been obscured by the greater achievement of his sons. Yet in many ways he was more remarkable than they. From him they gained few of the so-called advantages—education, culture, position, or money—but an inestimable heritage of natural endowments.

Among all the letters that have come down to us, Colonel Andrew's stand out in a class by themselves. Though he had few advantages and little to

stimulate a ready pen, his style has a direct vigor that makes every phrase worth reading. But its greatest charm comes from the racy metaphors which now and then blow up from the page like a sea breeze. For example, he once found it hard work pulling a butter firkin to the freight office on a sled, because "after getting through the woods on the McKeen road the snow was so scattering as to need a drum & fife to call it together—This truckage I shall charge you 50 cents for and the hardest 50 c. I have earned this winter."¹

The Brunswick *Telegraph* for July 9th, 1869, in a summary of the funeral address, gives a glowing picture of the esteem Colonel Andrew had won from his fellow citizens:

In the course of his remarks, Dr. Adams alluded to the ever courteous and gentlemanly address of the deceased, to his constant and genial flow of spirits, ingenuity as a mechanic, his love and cultivation of music, his decided military tastes and bearing, his devotion to all matters of public concern, his early enlistment in the causes of temperance and anti-slavery, the high esteem in which he was held by all classes, his integrity, his christian character, his death in the hopes of a blessed immortality. . . .

In his early days the Col. was an active and energetic politician, but always fair and aboveboard. He possessed a most curious and inquiring mind, and it is only a few weeks since, that he met us and put a sharp question as to the construction of language, which we should rather have expected from some close student in philology, than from one who had spent almost his whole life in mechanical pursuits. . . .

An incident will illustrate his integrity. For some time he acted as Deputy Sheriff of the county. Through some mistake in the execution of the law, his sureties then men of wealth became involved. Twenty years afterward, the Colonel for the first time was able to repay the advances made by his sureties, and this he did to men upon whom reverses had wrought sad ruin.

It is perhaps to that "most curious and inquiring mind" of Colonel Andrew that his sons owe their greatest debt. For that is the quality above all others which gave them the impetus to strike ahead into new fields of accomplishment.

¹Colonel Andrew to Aaron, December 27, 1848.

Chapter Seven

1869 - 1873

PROBLEMS AND POLICIES OF EXPANSION

IN LOOKING back over the successive phases of Dennison history, it is interesting to see how each one fits into the great mosaic of American economic development.

At the beginning, it was the advent of machinery in the shoe industry which threatened Colonel Andrew's livelihood. Likewise, the dependence of American jewelers on uncertain import shipments of jewelry boxes made an opening for home manufacture. Once the business was started, those factors which were bringing about a revival of general business—particularly the opening up of new markets through railroad construction, the discovery of gold in California, and increased immigration—helped place the Dennison enterprise in a position strong enough to survive the Panic of '57 and the following depression.

Then came the Civil War, which gave a tremendous impetus to the slowly growing industries of the country; for in addition to the stimuli of wartime demands and soaring prices, high war tariffs were imposed on imported manufacturers. The importance of this situation to Dennison & Co. we have already pointed out in connection with shipping tags and gum labels.

Immediately following the Civil War the expansion of industry, which in many respects was unhealthy, was interrupted by deflation, falling prices, and commercial depression. But in 1868 Congress prohibited further retirement of paper money, business gradually resumed speed and soon entered on a period of unprecedented activity.

The affairs of Dennison & Co. were in good order to take advantage of this prosperity; for in 1867 the Boston end of the business had been moved to larger quarters at 71 Milk Street, soon spreading to 73 Milk, with a workroom round the corner on Federal Street. Here, in addition to sample rooms and



DENNISON & CO.

H. B. Dennison, E. W. Dennison, Henry Hawks, Albert Metcalf

offices, were facilities for manufacturing tags and gum labels, cutting jewelry cards, and printing. Much tag manufacturing was also being done in E. L. Perkins' cardboard plant at Roxbury, which had long supplied E. W. with stock for jewelry cards and tags.

During 1869, when Mauger was visiting his successor in the tag business, he was taken out to see the Roxbury plant, and as E. W. wrote Metcalf, "Perkins said that he gazed upon the sights there with admiration and expressed the opinion that Perkins, Dennison & Co. need fear no competition." Perkins was not, as a matter of fact, in actual partnership with Mr. Dennison, but had been so closely associated with him for many years that when Aaron received a photograph of Dennison & Co. in 1875, he wrote:

There seems to be but one thing lacking and that is the face of the firm's firm friend Perkins. There should appear at least a spirit Photo of him over the head of the venerable head of the firm and between those of H. B. D.¹ & H. H.

In spite of excellent accommodations at Roxbury and increased facilities elsewhere, Dennison & Co. found itself hard pressed to supply the growing demand, especially in the box line. Here expansion had been going on since 1863, when "troches" were taken to Brunswick. In addition to the Newtonville and Brunswick units, a crew was established at Newton Corner during 1866. Four years later the work was taken to Boston, where William Spear—the same who had left in 1865 to seek his fortune—was once more running a Dennison box shop. Meantime, Newtonville had been closed, and a Fine box² factory opened in Brunswick. These goods were so popular that in 1870 a larger Brunswick plant was secured in the Dunlap Block.

Brunswick, however, proved a source of endless difficulty. In the first place E. W. had overestimated the labor supply and it was found impossible to recruit and train girls fast enough. To attract girls outside of Brunswick, E. W. himself bought and equipped a boarding-house for them, but it seems to have been more of a nuisance than a benefit.³

¹H. B. Dennison became a member of the firm in 1870.

²The word Fine was used at this time to distinguish shoulder boxes from the cheaper types of boxes.

³In 1910 a girls' boarding house was started at Framingham to overcome a similar labor shortage, but this, too, proved more of a problem than it was worth.

E. W. did not lack ingenuity, and when it became clear that enough labor could not be found, he suggested using what they had to better advantage at least "through the present jam" by a division of labor which he called "parcelling." His plan was to divide work on the more expensive boxes, which had hitherto been confined to the best workers, so that partly trained girls could do the first operations and leave only the outside strips to be pasted by the older hands.

Another device E. W. urged was farming out #41 boxes, which were the cheapest and easiest to make. By this plan, the same that was used for tag stringing at Falmouth,¹ he hoped not only to increase production, but to establish a group from which help would drift into the shop for better pay. He suggested paying home workers about the same for making a gross of boxes as for stringing and bunching 1000 tags (15c), adding, "It would depend upon whether there was anything else to do in the community or not as to above price answering—But we should have a care to set it low enough for two reasons—one to induce them to come to the shop and the other to pay us for our extra trouble."²

The wages which E. W. counted on to draw workers to the shop seem low to us, but for trained workers, at least, they do not appear out of line with wage levels of that day. In Brunswick E. W. aimed to pay per gross enough to bring a trained worker \$6.00 per week for fine stock work,³ and slightly more in Boston to compensate for higher living costs. On September 20, 1872, he wrote, "For Steady and agreeable work I am Satisfied that we have Set our prices rather above than below the mark."

Yet in the same letter he said, "I see that of the 40 hands that applied from Jany '72, Eleven have left on act. of pay." The principal cause of this turnover was that during the training period a girl was paid only what she earned. To remedy this trouble, young Lithgow Dennison, superintendent of the shop, proposed guaranteeing \$3.00 a week for the first three months. As this proposal seemed to promise more immediate relief than the farming-out plan, E. W. agreed to it, with one or two safeguards against being taken

¹Begun by Matilda Swift about the time of the Civil War.

²E. W. to B. L. Dennison, September 18, 1872.

³About 23c per gross.

advantage of by "young and flighty hands" who "would be indifferent to quantity or quality of work so long as they were sure of pay."

Evidently the factory system was not firmly established in this section of Maine, for E. W. complained of frequent absences from work and lack of attention on the part of the younger hands. On September 16 of this year he wrote:

Another trouble comes from the general youthfulness of your crew, who are as yet often unformed in Character, and, Care more for fun than work. Steady application becomes irksome to them, and fun has more Charms than money—I would Cite in proof of this the Case of Some of the ring makers, who would make their days work, and leave by half past four—Pay \$6 to \$8 per week.

Yet in the matter of offering special inducement, he remarked, "It will not do for us in our present Emergency to Establish precedents that will become burdensome to us by and by."

As business continued abnormally brisk, facilities both at Brunswick and Boston were pushed to the utmost, and in 1872, during the fall rush, E. W. wrote Lithgow:

Unless this new effort Evening work & C does increase our product largely we shall soon have to begin to divide the large orders as we did last fall—

We have instructed all houses but Phil^a not to urge off fine work this fall as we can't fill—

Philadelphia was allowed to continue its activity in order to offset N. M. Kerr & Co. of that city, a formidable competitor in the box field.

As Christmas approached the shortage of boxes became more acute. Even though large orders were divided, E. W. wrote on November 5:

An Examination by Henry shows 500 Gro fine yet unfilled—No doubt you have a number of gross of these in progress but even then the figures are startling.

Three days later he was even more emphatic:

We would gladly be relieved of taking orders for fine work of any description for the balance of the season, and all hands are told to solicit no orders, and when obliged to take them, state our situation to the trade—

Another problem of Fine box production was that of die stamping the covers. Printing orders were so spasmodic that while sometimes there was work enough for four or five presses, often there was not half enough for one. Incidentally, it was this very problem which, early in the next century, led Dennison to exploit die-stamped tags and cards for Christmas.

These problems, serious enough in themselves, were complicated by the fact that at Brunswick, Lithgow Dennison was a poor executive. E. W.'s almost daily letters of instructions show that he was carrying this shop on his own shoulders at a time when all his energies were needed elsewhere. Finally in 1874 Lithgow was requested to resign, and Frank Chandler was put in his place. William Spear, however, supervised the work, spending some time each week in Brunswick.

Not with boxes only, but with tags and other stationers' items had Dennison & Co. reached a position of leadership. Early in 1870 E. W. wrote, "The last years profits will wipe out the Expense of disposing of the only two formidable competitors in the country, Mauger and Miller—for I look upon our position with him as as disastrous if not more so than in open Competition."

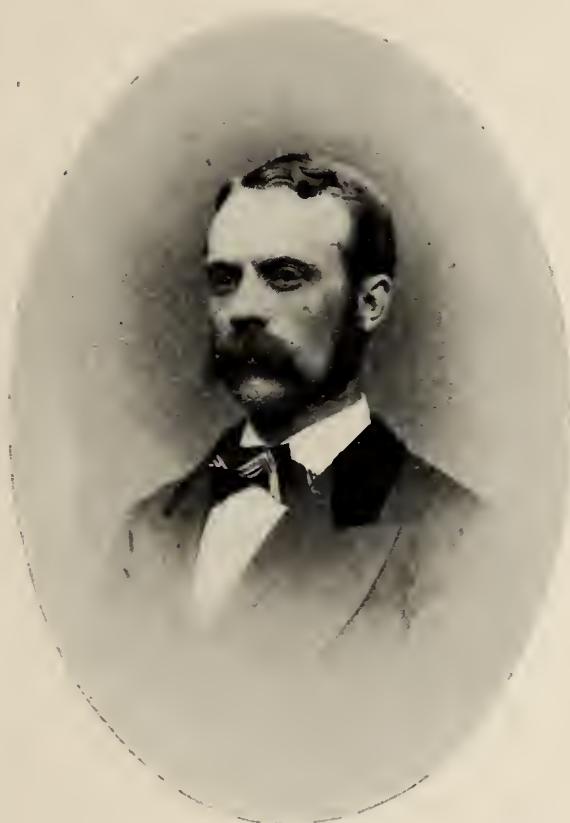
At the first hint of revival in the South, he dispatched Metcalf to investigate its possibilities, particularly for cotton tags, and get a line on competition, which was becoming active in that region. On the whole E. W. was reassured by the results of Metcalf's investigations, for he wrote on February 14, 1870, "In reviewing the ground after reading Your various reports we find that our goods are now in the hands of Every wholesaler in the country and with very few Exceptions are the only Merchantable Tag in the market."

This airy statement of the situation was partly due to E. W.'s optimism, for the West, in particular, had many distribution problems yet to be solved.

As we have just said, E. W. considered his position with Miller, his Chicago agent, more dangerous than open competition, because Miller persisted in underselling his neighbors. E. W., therefore, bought him out in 1868 "to protect the sellers of our goods in a profit."¹ Though Dennison & Co. then established an office of its own under C. E. Benson, its troubles with Chicago were not yet over. Miller's printing plant, which E. W. also bought, he disposed of on credit to Henry Wilson, a Miller employee. For some reason

¹E. W. Dennison to Henry Wilson, November 5, 1877.

Wilson was given certain trade privileges which hampered Benson in working the city trade. Therefore, when the agreement came up for renewal in 1870, E. W. dictated a new one by which, as he wrote Metcalf, "all restraint is removed from the city retail so that Benson will have an open market and have the privilege of talking up Pats & D & Co^s goods generally. I look upon this as a great point gained."



C. E. BENSON

At the same time, young Talbot, who later became president of the Company, was battling with homesickness, which almost impelled him to return East. E. W., remembering his own first days away from home when, as he said, "had my friends allowed me to go home . . . I would have Walked bare foot through the woods and lived on berries," persuaded him to stay a while longer.

In the summer of 1871 Talbot was transferred to the New York selling force. On his first trip West he was stopping temporarily at the old stand in Chicago when a momentous event occurred. In the words of his 1898 *Sketch*:

During my absence Mr. Benson had furnished rooms over the store for living purposes, and it was in these rooms Varian¹ and I were asleep ten minutes before our store burned on that fearful night the 9th of October, 1871, when Chicago was literally razed to the ground.

When reports of the disaster reached Boston, stock was immediately shipped to Cincinnati, and Metcalf was dispatched to investigate the damage in Chicago. He found that of the \$20,000 worth of Dennison stock destroyed by the fire, less than 2% could be collected. But Chicago at once showed signs of such miraculous recovery that he decided not to abandon the city and instead, ordered a complete new stock. Then while Benson looked after the new stock at Cincinnati, Metcalf and Talbot set to work amidst the ruins of Chicago. The latter said of these days in 1898, "It was not work to sell goods —they sold themselves; but it was work to hunt through piles of freight mountains high, for cases that contained goods so badly needed."

With the extension of sales effort into the South and West, came the problem of pacifying Dennison's large jobbing accounts. Attempts to do this brought up difficulties then as now. At first no definite discount policy was followed, and apparently Metcalf on his Southern trip found Dennison jobbers complaining that some retailers got as good terms as they.

On February 12, 1870, E. W. wrote:

There is force in what you Claim for the wholesale dealers. We have gradually worked into a class of Semi-Retail & Wholesale and too many cases purely retail which does give perplexity and I am disposed to remedy it if possible without too great sacrifice of profit—Without doubt Exclusive wholesalers Should have a better Dis't than Semi Wholesalers—

At that time, due to the undeveloped state of Southern and Western trade, it was hard to say which customers were entitled to wholesale discounts and

¹A salesman who had recently joined the Chicago staff.

which were not. Already trouble had arisen from price cutting, and there is a familiar ring to the words of caution with which, after Metcalf's suggestion, E. W. set the extreme discount on shipping tags at 40%. "This must be only to Strictly wholesale trade. The Test being do you ever retail not do you Ever wholesale."

In this connection it is interesting to observe the evolution of Dennison's East-and-West pricing policies. At first the theory was that Western list prices should be higher than Eastern, to allow for freight, expense of conducting branch offices, etc., but by 1872 the interchange of trade between the sections of the country had become so direct that uniform lists had been adopted. Theoretically it was intended to keep discounts uniform also, but E. W.'s policy of allowing his managers latitude in their own territories led to many irregular quotations. By October of 1872 we find E. W. defending this haphazard policy for his type of goods in a letter to Aaron. "I am Satisfied that there is no fixed rate of discount from day to day for anything Except fully Established goods that have already Created a demand for the Supply, and in advance of it."

One of the most serious jobber troubles encountered was with Chatfield & Woods of Cincinnati, who took offense at Dennison & Co.'s sudden entrance into that market after the Chicago fire. At the same time, moreover, a local tag concern opened a cut-throat competition to welcome the newcomer, which annoyed Chatfield & Woods as well as Dennison. The latter, as usual, tried to buy out the troublesome competitor, but was balked by exorbitant demands till the following spring. Meantime, Chatfield & Woods demanded that the Dennison office be closed. E. W. was anxious to conciliate them, if possible, without losing his hold on the district,—that is, to get the best of the bargain without appearing to. The letter which he wrote Mr. Chatfield, August 20, 1872, is quoted in full, for it shows E. W. at his best.

I regret that unforeseen Events will prevent my meeting you as pr appointment tomorrow. But as I cannot, I wish to explain partially the reason that I have so far been beaten in my proposed removal of our Cina office.

You are well aware that our trade is devoted to specialties, of Which Shipping Tags bear a part, Jewellers findings another, and Stationers goods another, and quite important Share.

The Shipping Tags are so narrowed in variety that a full line stock is Easily Carried, and I am satisfied that the trade in this line would be increased by our absence from that market.

The Jewellers goods we should have no trouble in finding a party to Carry a full line of, but the Stationers Stock comprising from 5 to 600 varieties of goods, I find more difficult to manage, and the point upon which all but myself agree is that too much of the future interests of this class of trade will be sacrificed by a removal after so long established as we have been there.

Nearly all of our Stationers Trade of Cin^a is of the mixed order, who both wholesale & retail. Nor do we know of an Exclusive wholesale customer in that market, which makes it impossible for us to make overtures to either to Carry a full line, to supply his neighbors from (even if the trade were developed to permit it) without liability of offence to the others.

Our forced move to Cin^a we regret for many reasons and for none more than that it bears the appearance of Competition with some of our most esteemed Customers, while Such a construction should not be put upon it.

Indirectly for the time being, the Shipping Tag Trade of Cin^a was completely demoralized by our removal there, from the fact that it put the Cin^a competing manufacturers on the market to Sell regardless of profit to force us to a purchase, during which time they almost monopolized the market. This together with the Consequent loss of interest in Sales where the profit was gone did for the time do its work.

From increased demands we have reason to judge that the effect of this demoralization, is fast working off, and will eventually disappear, and that our Shipping Tag trade in that market will rank with other Sections of the Country.

Our folks use one argument that it is difficult to Controvert, and that is that the presence of one Establishment will prevent others springing up while its absence might result in a repetition of this evil.

At all events it is agreed to rent our front office to the first bidder, and prepare more fully to filter our manufactures through sellers.

There is one thing sure, and that is, that we have forfeited Your influence to our Mutual disadvantage, and we would gladly recover it. With the exception of the City trade I see no reason why you

should not sell just as many or more of our manufactures, than ever before, with the same efforts of your salesmen that they formerly made.

The prices were forced so low in your market before the break up of the old concern there that we cannot make any change at present in them, but in consideration of what your house had done, and can do, I shall propose to you quarterly Settlements, and 3 mos. notes without interest on your purchases.

The Cincinnati store was accordingly reduced to a back-room office, and left in charge of C. A. Sanders.

As for shipping terms, very little definite information is available. In 1870 we find that Benson was allowed "cheap shipping" to fight a local competitor, which probably meant that part of the freight cost was assumed by the factory so that Chicago could quote lower prices. Whether goods were billed F. O. B. the store cities only, at that time, is not clear, but five years later the Wholesale Circulars state that goods are delivered freight free to all points east of the Mississippi.

The problem of post-dating had also come up at this early stage in connection with Donis M. Monjo & Co. This was a New York stationery house in which Dennison had acquired a half interest in order to eliminate their merchandise tag competition. E. W. wrote Mr. Monjo on October 3, 1872:

Metcalf wrote you that you might propose settlements twice a year if it would help you out—

It will be easy to show the trade that this is much preferable to a consignment of the goods as no party need to carry a heavy Stock and this could be run as low as they choose in Jany July with their ability to order from us in the dull seasons as lightly as they choose—

It occurs to me that this should be only used if necessary and mostly with the larger buyers that he would be likely to consign to—

Merchandising during this period went on rapidly, not so much because new goods were needed to capture an unwilling market—such was not the case—but because it was in E. W.'s nature to reach out continually for something new.

Soon after his trip through the South, Metcalf took another journey of far more significance. The twenty-third of March, 1871, he sailed for Europe on the *Batavia*, "a ship which none of us would now think of accepting to convey us to Block Island."¹

His primary purpose was to seek new sources or supply for imported jewelry boxes, jewelers' tissue, and the parchment used in small marking tags. Although unsuccessful with the first item, he made two connections which later proved to be of great importance. One was with the Crompton Mill of Bury, England, where he found an excellent grade of non-tarnishing tissue. It was this mill which later supplied Dennison with a variety of colored tissues and then with the first crepe paper. Activities begun at that time to popularize these items laid the foundation for our present elaborate methods of spreading Dennison handicrafts.

The second connection Metcalf formed was with David Cooper of London, from whom he began ordering parchment. An intimacy sprang up between the two which led to Cooper's becoming sole agent for Dennison goods in England. If ever an "entangling alliance" caused trouble it was this one, for through it our own efforts in the English market were obstructed clear into the present century.

To get back to the '70's, we find that Dennison's patent tag was by no means the only one on the market. True, it had little competition in its own class, but cheaper grades were making headway, especially with large consumers. In fact, Dennison salesmen found that metal-eyelet tags, which became available once more after the war, were still in great demand. In 1870, therefore, E. W. put out a metal-eyelet tag called the "Nye," after William Nye of the tag department. Though he still thought it policy to keep Patents in the foreground, he realized that the "sweets of Monopoly" were of the past, not the future. "All that we Can Expect is to keep our distance ahead of all Comers."²

Two years later competitors became so numerous in New England that a still cheaper tag, the "Wilde," named for another Dennison employee,³ was launched. Patent tags at that time sold for \$4 per thousand (#5), Nyes for \$2.75, and Wildes were listed at \$2.38.

¹Metcalf's 1898 *Sketch*.

²E. W. to Metcalf and Benson, October 28, 1871.

³Note the many ways by which E. W.'s "boys" were made to feel part of the firm.

In view of the fact that we are prone to think of Chicago in the old days as a cut-throat market always clamoring for cheaper goods, the following letter to Benson is illuminating. Instead of demanding cheaper goods, he had evidently protested against lowering Dennison quality, to which E. W. replied, August 21, 1872:

I knew that you would feel bad about the Wilde Tags but am Satisfied that you will see the Wisdom of the move before the year is over.

Your market alone can afford to stand the old status with the exception of the St. Louis portion which already feels the need of Wilde and must have it right off. Boston has still the Fall River and Metcalfs¹ pegging away and Clinton preparing to come into market generally. Connecticut has Pultz; N. York, Geer, Hightstown, Fall River, New London, and the water proof man. Phila, the Phila Tag Co., Lockwood, and another concern. So you see, East there is getting to be need of a check in the way of a Cheap thing. You understand the Wilde list is placed low with short dis'ts not only to narrow the margins of this little Mosquito fleet but to bribe our own Customers to force the Patent to the front.

My argument is that customers who will not buy the Pat for quality will take most anything for Cheap—and that the Wilde list once Scattered will make it bad for the little folks to meet the ordinary Expenses of business.

The problem then, as now, was to combine quality with market expediency, in order to avoid being so far above competition as to be ruined by it.

Beside Brown's Troche boxes, Dennison & Co. were building up a Drugists' Line of boxes and powder papers. In October, 1872, E. W. figured that they had already sold 2,000,000 of the latter. Most of the Drug boxes were bought for resale from George Plumly, a friend of E. W.'s in Philadelphia. He also made boxes for Dennison's gum labels and seals, which were themselves growing in importance.

Sealing wax is another new item, destined to have an interesting history of ups and downs. This item appeared in 1869 when Victor Mauger offered to sell Waterston's Wax, which he imported from England, to Dennison & Co.

¹T. O. Metcalf & Co.

ANNUAL CATALOGUE

OF

Jewelers' Findings, &c.,

MANUFACTURED BY

DENNISON & CO.,

198 Broadway, N. Y.

CONSISTING OF

PAPER, JEWELRY BOXES, CARDS,

TAGS, GUM LABELS, PINK AND WHITE

COTTON, TWINE, &c.

1871.

for resale; by 1871 five numbers were being carried. Bankers and express companies were the largest consumers, as the uses of sealing wax at that time were almost wholly commercial.

As for the Jewelers' Line, in 1871 Dennison & Co. published its first Annual Catalogue of Jewelers' Findings, which gives us, for the first time, the list of items in detail. Beside paper boxes for jewelry and silverware, Fine colored boxes, and jewelry cards, it includes many small sundries not mentioned before, such as Twine, Rubber Bands, Wrapping or "Envelope" papers, Chamois Skins, Ribbon, Boxwood Sawdust for drying Jewelry, Job Envelopes, Wooden packing boxes; and shows an increasing tendency to take on outside products for resale. Among these was a line of domestic Morocco cases manufactured by Levi Nye, a former Dennison employee.

Phillips' Hook and Clasp tags about this time were substituted for a cheaper but inferior grade made by Fay. Fay immediately began selling in competition at very low prices. E. W., nothing daunted, was confident of driving him out of business by forcing him first to lower discounts and then to a better stock, thus cutting his profits at both ends. The situation gave him an opportunity to voice once more the first article of his creed:

If good goods do not win their way in this case as in all others that were ever got up by ourselves or anybody else, I shall believe in the election of Greely, and that the Common sense of the American people is "non est."¹

During these busy days of expansion, Dennison & Co. seemed fated to suffer periodic reverses. Thirteen months after the Chicago fire, another and more serious disaster occurred, this time at headquarters. It was on November 9, 1872, just two weeks before E. W.'s fifty-second birthday, that the great Boston Fire swept down Summer Street, leaving ashes and broken fortunes in its wake. On November 25, being confined to his house by a "crick" in the back, E. W. wrote Aaron of the destruction it had caused at 71 Milk Street.

When you was here we had a fair establishment but since you were here we had added to this the adjoining estate of same size and one less floor, making in all 7 floors about 34 x 70 all as full as an

¹E. W. to D. M. Monjo, August 3, 1872.

From Harper's Weekly, December 14, 1872

BOSTON AFTER THE GREAT FIRE

(Dennison headquarters at 71 Milk Street are marked by a white cross.)



egg with goods, machinery and 100 operatives— We had also taken the cellar and put into it an engine and machine shop with 3 machinists— It had been a constant out lay with us from the first taking of the lease and the setting of a second boiler for heating was barely completed on the fatal Saturday night— And it was during that week that the firm and Supt. were congratulating themselves that one of the most complete establishments in the world was finally done—

Saturday evening I was at the Club and from time to time got reports of the great fire raging in Summer Street that this customer and that one were gone but as broad Franklin Street was between us I felt no anxiety but when I started for home at 10.45 the great fire was plain enough— I went immediately to the store, and found Metcalf and a large crew of our boys before me, I went immediately to the roof and surveyed the chances, the fire had then reached the south side of Franklin. I regret to say that I still had confidence that it would be stayed there but the immense stores filled [with] Mdse created heat that nothing could stand before but I stood there one hour and a half—giving directions through my orderly to the crew at work below— First to obtain a team and then to get such machinery convenient to the door as it was essential to save. The Fire crossed Federal Street long before it did Franklin and narrow Channing Street¹ with the superhuman work of the firemen seemed destined to check it, and this was my signal of action— If it was stopped there I was all right for I still hoped for Franklin Street—

The first little light on the coping of store near side of Channing was the decisive moment with me— By this time we had a team ready and when partly loaded it was seized as a powder waggon for just then they decided to blow up buildings— We soon however got another waggon and went at it with a will— First went our tag machines and dies—and then our retail stock—

We were surrounded with friends, who formed a formidable corps loaded with books which were placed in the water registers office at the City Hall while our goods were dumped into the entries of the same— We succeeded in saving 3 loads amounting to about \$4000 worth of machinery and 6000 stock— We should have done better but that the blowing up about us drove our boys into panics— finally to put powder under our place and about 3 o'clock that went "sky high" with about \$90,000 worth of our property—On which we

¹Nearly a continuation of Franklin Street on the opposite side of Federal.

shall get about 45,000 dollars insurance— The saving of our books and machinery placed us in so much better condition than the average of the sufferers that we have no disposition to cry about it, but all have gone at it with a will to repair damages—Perkins factory received much of our machinery—our printing presses are in a private residence and our city box shop at 500 Tremont Street—

An advertisement in a Boston paper the following Monday announced that Dennison & Co. were ready to fill orders as promptly as usual from 10 Milk Street, manufacturing at 28 Oliver Street. Eventually new quarters were found at Suffolk Place, though from this time all shipping and marking tag manufacture was carried on at Roxbury.

As E. W. said, in spite of the loss and inconvenience caused by the fire, Dennison & Co. escaped better than many, and with the aid of a loyal organization, were soon able to go ahead under full sail. Industry as a whole was still enjoying remarkable prosperity, in which Dennison had its full share. E. W., however, had been through panics before, and more than once voiced a suspicion that hard times would again come up out of the offing. In the fall of '71, when orders were pouring in faster than they could be filled, he wrote Metcalf and Benson:

We need good help now more than trade but I feel as sure as ever that the time is coming that we shall want the trade for our present help—

How long such a period may hold off or last when it does come I don't know. But when the clouds pass off the atmosphere will be clearer than now of Mosquitoes. . . .

My Experience in the trade gives me a wide range of vision that no other single man possesses—

The merry pace kept on, however, and Dennison sales for September, 1872, reached a new "high." For that month E. W. reported that they were nearly \$10,000 more than for any previous month in his career. Nor was this the end—still another year of prosperity followed.

Nevertheless, E. W.'s intuitions were right. Such feverish activity, accompanied by the extravagant speculation incident to extreme price changes, could not last. Too rapid railroad expansion had strained credit to the utmost and

the failure of a stock brokerage house on September 13, 1873, pricked the bubble. As it burst, the whole financial structure of the country was threatened. First two important banks failed, then the Stock Exchange was closed for ten days, and on the twenty-fourth, New York banks partially suspended specie payments.

Confidence—the buoy of all commercial enterprise—was shattered. The result was severe depression in all lines of trade, lasting till 1878.

From time to time George Plumly wrote Mr. Dennison of panic conditions in Philadelphia and its serious effect on his own business. He congratulated E. W. on keeping up through October as well as he had, in spite of a shortage in cash. But by another month, Dennison business had been hit, for on the twenty-second of November E. W. wrote Aaron:

We have discharged about $\frac{3}{4}$ of our help and working short time with the other quarter—

Family all well and settled all except parlors which were partly done when the panic struck, and will remain so until over to the regret of the young folks.

Though this extreme situation was temporary, Dennison & Co., like all other industries, faced a succession of lean years which exacted greater resourcefulness than ever from the business man who hoped to succeed.

We find, then, that the years from '69 to '73 presented many problems to E. W. Dennison and his associates. Some arose from forces beyond their control, but more were inherent in the business and still recur periodically. There were the familiar bugbears connected with box manufacturing, the threats of cut-throat competition, the perplexities of selling terms, and that which always must be reckoned with, the vicissitudes of general trade conditions. Having survived fire and panic, in addition to the ordinary dangers of expansion, it now remained for Dennison & Co. to consolidate its gains by incorporation.

Chapter Eight

1873 - 1878

CONSOLIDATION

FOLLOWING the Panic of 1873, business sought to get its feet back on the ground and liquidation was the order of the day. As E. W. wrote Aaron early in '74, "I am so intent now upon liquidation that I have stopped many contemplated improvements that we need to facilitate our business until I can see through—All of the firm but Henry felt able to keep a horse, and I too, but all these little luxuries are now cut off by sale."

As a similar feeling was widespread among business men, buying became extremely hesitant. In addition to the uncertainty of the future, prices were falling so rapidly that buyers held off, waiting for still further reductions. As a result, till 1878-79 the country suffered a depression which proved fatal to many young enterprises. It was fortunate for Dennison & Co. that many factors had combined to strengthen its position during and after the Civil War. Otherwise the disastrous events of the early 'Seventies, following so closely on a decade of very rapid expansion, might have undermined the business completely.

As it was, except for a temporary stoppage after the Panic, depression did not affect Dennison sales till February, 1875. For the rest of the year and into '76 this depression continued, but in 1877 Dennison business began to improve and by the following year was definitely on the upswing.

Dennison & Co. entered the lean post-Panic years under a heavy debt because of its losses from fire. To this the year 1874 added still more, for in April the Perkins plant at Roxbury was seriously damaged, and Hawks suggested that "We shall come to look upon *fire* as our punishment in *this world*." In addition to indebtedness, the Company was saddled with a large though scattered producing plant, and a selling organization which had been increased to meet the needs of expansion.

Dennison business declined slightly during 1874, due in part to the fact that while the Perkins factory was being repaired, tag production had to be curtailed, which gave competitors an advantage in the field for about a year. In general the profits of manufacturers were seriously cut, for while the price of finished goods continued to fall, rent and wages remained abnormally high. But Dennison profits for 1874 kept up surprisingly well, in spite of the slightly lower sales. In February, 1875, E. W. described the situation to his friend and associate, E. Lamson Perkins.

We are about closing a year in which our sales will reach nearly to 100 fold the amount of the first year of my having it in charge—or nearly a half million dollars . . .

The marvel of this is that notwithstanding this large trade, we have been able to hold margins of profits as a whole that are unprecedented unless protected by patents or superior facilities.

That very month, however, business began to assume another aspect. February showed the most serious falling off the Company had ever experienced, and E. W. surmised that business would continue to decline till the great staples such as rent and salaries, which had been fixed by contract, came nearer to their old level. In June he wrote his brother:

The last year is the first since I started the business that it has not shown an agreeable increase, but this year will show a falling off at least 10%, and this last month of June over 20% from the June 74.

Besides this in these times there is a general look for depression of prices and we are called upon to shade all prices even more than the difference in cost—Besides this we have a constant petty competition springing up that is changing like a Kaleidescope—There has been more than 50 attempts to get foot hold in the Tag business and there are now scattered through the country about the usual number of 10 or 12 small makers going for the consumers trade.

Boston sales for July were only \$147 behind '74, which at the reduced prices showed a material gain in volume. But the insistent demand for cheap goods—a natural result of economies everywhere—and this "constant petty competition," ready to supply goods of a low order at little profit, were to say

the least annoying. Yet at nearly the lowest point of the grade (August, 1875), E. W. remained faithful to the earliest principle of the business. He wrote Hawks:

There are more customers for the best of Broadcloths than for Satinets and any quantity more Consumers of good Tags than poor—Now Fay¹ makes only the Satinet and that of the meanest Sort while we make Satinets and broadcloths too, and we find much the better market & Profit in Broad Cloths than Satinets.

The reason why he could speak thus confidently is not hard to find. The name of Dennison had already been firmly established with the dealer, by methods which E. W. explained to Perkins:

In the first place we have pursued a policy not unlike your own of protecting the seller of the goods, and thus securing their coöperation. This has been very valuable. Next we have as a rule made good goods and especially adapted to the uses to be put to. Next we have been prompt in all business relations. We have systematized many little usefuls of scattered sale but important in the aggregate, but which we could have made but little headway upon with out the system that has done more than all other to enable us to attain and hold our position—and now I refer to the system of having our full assortment represented in the principal markets of the union and thus bringing these little usefuls within the reach of the consumers of them. While by this means our expenses have been largely increased I have but to cite the fact that each branch has been more than self sustaining and we have been enabled by their means to check all formidable competition.

Though competitors frequently tried to get a foothold in the consumer field, where price was more potent than quality, the field was then so undeveloped and profits were forced so low that this class of business "would not sustain a mouse."

On the subject of competition in the South, D. M. Monjo of New York reported in 1874, after an investigating tour:

In New Orleans there are more Tags used today not of our make than there ever was before. The market is very unsettled and every

¹A merchandise tag competitor.

one clamoring for cheap. The Cotton Bales which used to be marked with our Patents are now marked with Eyelet tags. I have not a shadow of a doubt that this unsettled state in the South can be overcome by us but I do not think anybody else but ourselves can do it. You may see how it works in the south where you have to rely upon the Jobbers. Where you had a good jobber you kept your ground but where he took no interest in the goods the Patents have lost.

On Jewelers goods I think we are gaining and still many small Jewelers cannot buy because their wants are too small to warrant their ordering from so far.

These years of depression in the end served to clear the field of troublesome competitors, especially in the box line. The year 1877 saw the failure of two jewelry box makers, N. M. Kerr & Co. and Brooks, Bancroft & Co., both of which eventually came under Dennison control. The latter was a Boston firm run by George Brooks, who had formerly worked for Dennison. Lithgow Dennison and his business partner, one Charles Perkins, as heavy investors in the company, took it over till E. W. negotiated for their interest.

During this period, the Company's overhead expenses were steadily mounting. For one thing, advertising now had to be reckoned as a considerable item. In addition to directory advertising, Jewelers' and Stationers' Catalogues had become an annual occurrence, and a definite program of newspaper advertising had been adopted. During the Panic of '73, E. W. had written Aaron:

We have lately adopted a system of advertising that would seem admirably adapted to your business, and which after a 3 mos trial the success warrants us in another — This is to set aside 30 cts on each 1000 Patent Shipping Tags sold as a newspaper advertising.

After the second three months this procedure was stopped, doubtless due to prevailing business uncertainty. But in 1875, despite widespread depression, E. W. proposed renewing the plan, which he thought had not been tried long enough before. He wrote Benson on March 5:

I now propose to put a whole year of this fund into one quarter, and if we feel it, Continue on quarterly — I would have the name of Dennison & Co as familiar in Connexion with reliable goods as Day & Martin's is with good Blacking.



DENNISON'S NEW STORE AT MILK AND HAWLEY STREETS, DECORATED FOR THE
HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF BUNKER HILL

Likewise, the sales organization, with its growing staff and separate stores, was making sales expense a large factor in the business. A sixth store had been opened at St. Louis just before the Panic to cover Southern trade.

Expenses at Boston were also increasing. As the store at Suffolk Place, where Dennison & Co. went after the fire, was unsatisfactory, in 1875 they returned to the old neighborhood, leasing a new building at the corner of Milk and Hawley Streets. For this they paid \$6000 per year, but sublet the street floor to another concern. Here, with an illuminated clock on the cupola and a flag pole on top, Dennison & Co. equipped itself for the struggle.¹

These increased expenses of doing business, together with falling prices and keener competition, brought home to E. W. the necessity of three things,—larger markets, a more efficient organization, and more active merchandising.

As for the first, E. W. was aware that the amount of goods manufactured would decrease the relative cost of production, and announced to Aaron that "our facilities for cutting out Tags are such that with one girl we can cut a supply for the whole world. So in our box business . . . 8 months of the year we have no work for half the crew."

Judged by our present standards, the domestic market had hardly been scratched. It is true, Dennison goods by this time had filtered to the West coast, but no systematic attempt was made to cover the whole country. In fact, Dennison operations, outside of a few large cities, were negligible. Yet instead of finding his larger markets through more intensive selling at home, E. W. turned his thoughts abroad, and through D. M. Monjo in 1874 made a trial of Cuba. On March 12, in a lengthy report which can only be quoted in part, Monjo described the situation.

I had some business cards printed with the address where samples could be seen and then called upon every first class Jeweler in Havana. Many came & looked at my samples. I took orders from seven Jewelers also some for Merchandise Tags from others.

I found here any quantity of German cheap Jewelry boxes also some French boxes like our 41 but I got over these last with the 40 Box printed selling 10 gross of them. I was in hopes to be able to get over the cheap German cases with our 430 Boxes but in this I was

¹Here Dennison remained till 1885, when our present Boston store was occupied.

unsuccessful. The prices laid down in Havana being about the same on both, the preference of the purchaser being always in favor of the case. Still I was not satisfied with this and got Mr. Hawks to send me a small lot of plated Jewelry which I placed in some boxes I had brought with me and showed them up so. This pleased them better but still I could not get orders for any quantity. . . .

In doing business there we are at a great disadvantage for the reason that all our goods have to be imported in American or English bottoms whereas goods imported from Germany or England can be imported in Spanish bottoms and the duty on goods imported there in Spanish bottoms is from 10% to 30% less, than if imported in foreign ships. From this you can readily see the disadvantage we are under in the Jewelers goods but a part of this disadvantage is gotten over by our nearness to that market. I have not a doubt that many Jewelers would prefer to buy less and pay a little more, than, as some have told me, buy a 10 years stock. . . .

On Tags I think we have a good field there. There are many used, or better said, might be used. Now the consumers of Tags buy playing cards by the gross packs, cut the card in two, punch a hole into it with a nail, write the address on the back of the card and tie it to the article to be marked. The cards have figured backs and of course are little adapted to such a use.

When I was going to Matanzas, I was at the depot at 4 o'clock in the morning, train starting at 4.30 A.M. and while waiting saw the station master marking some bags of fresh fish some chinamen were sending to sell there. Of course it was dark and the light of the lantern was not over bright. He could scarcely see his writing on the cards owing to the figures on it. I came up to him and gave him a small pack of our #14 Patents and told him to use those instead and also to say to his Superior what I told him about using them & where they could be purchased.

This report is the last we hear of the Cuban venture, but another foreign country, England, had already begun to intrigue E. W.'s imagination. In 1876 E. W. wrote Aaron's son, Edward, who had settled in London, regarding possibilities there. His idea was that Dennison goods in England might bring a surplus profit which would enable him to sell goods in the home market "at starvation prices to others."

Edward's information was scant and not very encouraging. He sent samples of English jewelry boxes, which as he said were poorly made, "but the point with English shopkeepers is to buy very cheaply"; and they were supplied directly by the makers. As for English shipping labels he said, "I know what they are, rough and cheap, but answer the purpose; anything more expensive would not sell."

Nevertheless, at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia E. W.'s enthusiasm was increased by talking with some English jewelers, and he proposed to send over his most reliable man with samples to canvass the consumer. As Metcalf approved and Hawks opposed, E. W. wrote his son Henry that the deciding vote was cast by Harry Dyer,¹ "that Peckham should give that market an immediate trial and he was telegraphed to yesterday to hasten home and will take the first boat that he can get on to." That was the first of October. Two months later E. W. wrote Aaron the result of this experiment:

Mr. Ps lack of success in the J B line is one of the greatest disappointments of my life. I thought that I understood the stupidity of the English but I knew absolutely nothing of it — While the real errand "ie" that of finding a market to keep my help together, was a failure still the eventual result from openings in other lines of goods we have reason to believe will compensate us for all the outlay as well as set at rest a problem that has bothered my brain ever since I passed through England — We shall probably sell a great many Tags in England both Mdse & Shipping Tags—and may sell some boxes.

It was impossible to quench this man's vigorous optimism. Yet if ever he needed optimism, it was during the black years of the middle 'Seventies. Personal events and business affairs combined to offer discouragement. In 1875, when business was more depressed than at any time since '61, not only were Hawks and Metcalf in poor health much of the time and unable to take their full share of responsibility, but Henry Dennison's health was a source of constant anxiety.

In 1870 Henry had married a girl to whom he was much attached. She soon developed a serious heart trouble (a fact which they concealed from Mr. Dennison) and it was worry from this cause, in addition to the long hours

¹An example of Dyer's growing influence.

spent in systematizing the business, which caused Henry's breakdown in the spring of 1875. That summer his father persuaded him to take a trip abroad. Henry's absence threw still another burden on E. W., especially while the move from Suffolk Place to Milk Street was being completed, and during this year for the first time the older man began to feel his age.

The winter of 1876 was one of more absences, as Hawks, Metcalf, and Henry all sought a milder climate. The fall of that same year found Henry's health no better, and he was dispached this time to Wyoming for a taste of ranch life. A few weeks after his return, a son was born, Henry Sturgis Dennison, and nine days later his wife's dreaded heart disease proved fatal. E. W. generously sent his son on another long trip till the worst was over, but the blow was one from which H. B. Dennison never quite recovered.

It is a coincidence that at this point in Henry B. Dennison's career, H. K. Dyer began to come into power. This young man not only had unquestionable force and ability, but a nature which appealed to Mr. Dennison, who came to regard him as a son and to depend upon him more and more. Men who knew them say they were much alike—both of huge physique and robust temperament. But that very robustness which in the older man attracted others to him, in the younger man frequently repelled them.

In April of 1877 Henry Hawks retired from the Company and Dyer succeeded him as Manager of the New York store. Hawks' ill health was the obvious reason for his retirement, but there was also the feeling, as he wrote E. W., "that I am wedded to the old system which I presume includes a rigid economy in store expenses, opposition to reckless advertising, uniformity in prices, and in classifying trade—and above all holding the direction of these details in hands of seniors." Hawks' assistant, Fred Goodwin, who in the old days had often been tempted to discharge Dyer, now found this same young man put in as his superior.

This readjustment in New York was one of several steps taken by E. W. to make the Company shipshape for a strenuous passage. The previous year the New York force had been strengthened by employing F. B. Gilbert, formerly with Victor Mauger.¹ In this year, too, St. Louis had been put in order. When

¹Gilbert's knowledge of sealing wax acquired under Mauger proved an asset to Dennison when in 1879 the Company began making its own wax.

it was found that under Alfred Varian the business was almost entirely local and no effort was being made to extend it by advertising or soliciting, Varian was put back on the Chicago selling force and J. F. Talbot was made manager of St. Louis.

Chicago under Benson was more than holding its own and Sanders at Cincinnati, while not a brilliant manager, was left undisturbed; but the situation at Philadelphia under H. B. Sommer was not satisfactory. In 1878 the store was moved to a new location and Dyer was made supervisor of the district from New York. After his first visit to the new store Dyer reported:

Phila Store is the *Boss* store of the lot, as pretty and as neat as a pin (private stained glass office, pictures of Joseph & his Brethren & Daniel swallowing Lions, &c &c) Juliet Balconys with flower gardens in rear and altogether I feel tempted to transfer my headquarters to that city.

While these various improvements were being made in the selling end, the production problem was also attacked. In Boston a drastic campaign for "the systematic corking of leaks, pruning, and scraping off of barnacles and drones" was inaugurated, and some of the cheaper help were reduced in pay.

As drink had been making ravages among the employees, E. W. himself, after years of moderate imbibing, set the example against it. Two men whom it had unfitted for work were Nye of the tag department and Stratton of the gumming room. Early in 1878 E. W. decided to check up on these departments, and on February 3 wrote Henry:

Come to figure cost of stringing shipping tags we find it to be plump 41c per M and we have always called it 35c. . . . So we find that gummed paper costs 20c more than we have ever counted. . . . But no doubt these are trifles in comparison with other leaks.

After a severe warning, considerable improvement was made, but Nye relapsed and was finally discharged. A New York salesman was also discharged for drinking. Not for several years did Stratton meet a similar fate.

The need for economy was brought home still more forcibly to E. W. in February, 1878, when Russell's Commercial Bulletin unexpectedly cut Dennison

& Co.'s credit rating more than half. In writing Henry a few days later, E. W. gave vent to his feelings:

I was not only perplexed but I was made to think that with 200,000 surplus and live stuff too our credit should be doubted and that I should be forced to "kite" for the first time in twenty years, and it was pretty close kiting too for we were not sure of paying our notes before half-past one o'clock. A pretty thing to be gazetted in the Bulletin, D. & Co. gone up. Liabilities \$150,000 and assets \$350,000. No wonder I cast back in retrospect and see at least 100,000\$ in the last 25 years spent needlessly. I see that now not only the caulking iron must be applied but the pruning knife too.

The results of the campaign for economy he reported to Benson at the end of the year:

I knew that by putting our "Shoulders to the wheel" we could snap our fingers at the money venders in a short time and promised to owe 50,000 less Feb. 79 than Feb. 78 — We now owe 40,000 less with two mos. to go.

In the merchandise lines during these years two compensating forces were at work. First, in response to the general trend, Dennison prices on established goods were going down. To offset these reductions, new items were sought and adopted for the high profit they would bring while their novelty lasted.

To consider first the matter of price reductions, in 1875 Dennison & Co. published lower lists on practically all items and offered rebates to dealers for stock on hand. By 1878 in the tag line we find a fifty-cent reduction on #5 Patents, originally selling for \$4 per thousand. In the same year a cheap patent tag called Novelty was put out, #5 selling for \$2 per thousand. In 1874 the Local, a cheap metal eyelet tag selling for \$1.50 per thousand, had been listed, probably to nurse the market along after the Panic. This disappeared from the lists after one year, but in 1877 its place was taken by the Job or X tag, which sold for the same price. An XX tag was also put out during the 'Seventies—"trash" to meet the lowest competition. Printing and stringing prices were reduced, the latter reduction as far as possible being passed on in lower rates to the Falmouth tag stringers.



DENNISON & CO.,



Manufacturing Stationers, Tag Manufacturers and Importers,
MANUFACTURE

DENNISON'S PATENT SHIPPING TAGS.

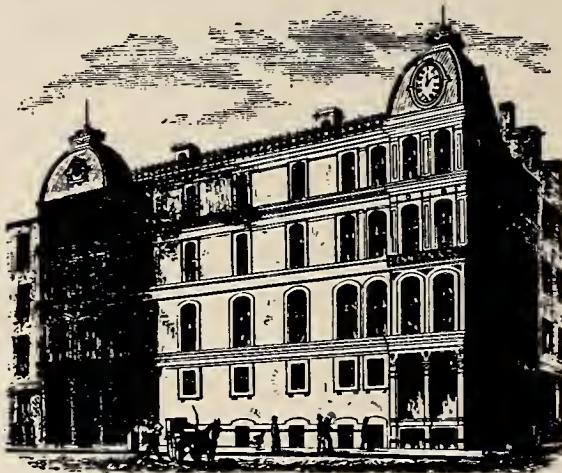
Metal Eyelet Shipping Tags,
(FROM ALL-ROPE PAPER, MANILLA PAPER, PARCHMENT, AND LINEN.)

DENNISON'S STANDARD MERCHANDISE TAGS IN GREAT VARIETY.

STRATTON'S GUM LABELS, NOTARIAL AND LEGAL SEALS AND GUMMED PAPER.

ROWLAND'S
PATENT

Star Copying
Pad,
SUPERIOR TO ALL
OTHER
DEVICES
FOR THE
COPYING OF
LETTERS.



DENNISON'S
IVORY SURFACE
Indestructible
Game
COUNTERS.

PLAYING CARD
AND
VISITING CARD
CASES.

DENNISON'S TARGETS, TARGET PASTERS, AND SCORE CARDS FOR RIFLE PRACTICE.

Mentzel's Patent Suspension Rings.

PROPRIETORS OF

"GLOBE" AND "EXCELSIOR" PRIZE TISSUE PAPERS.

Importers of the Celebrated No. 39 Mill

ENGLISH GRASS-BLEACHED, PEARL BLUE, AND COLORED TISSUE PAPERS.

AGENTS FOR SALE OF

Phillips' Patent Hook and Clasp Tags, Stevens' Patent Clasp Tags, Kimball's Self-Fastening Tickets, and Anderson's Improved Suspension Hooks.

WE ALSO FURNISH AT MANUFACTURERS' DISCOUNTS

McGILL'S PAPER FASTENERS AND DICKINSON'S "CONGRESS" RUBBER BANDS.



OFFICES:

Boston, New York,

Philadelphia, Chicago,

Cincinnati, St. Louis.



In the merchandise tag line a similar reduction took place, and the cheap Notion tag was added with which to fight Fay's "Busy Bee."

Competition in the Jewelers' line was much less vigorous than on tags, so that the price decline on boxes was neither as radical nor as uniform as in the Stationers' line.

The effort to develop new Dennison specialties resulted in many additions to both lines. To consider first the Stationers' line, H. B. Dennison's coin wrappers and E. W.'s shaving papers took well in the market. Charles Sawyer's Postal Sample Envelopes failed because of trouble with the Postal authorities. Other new items were restaurant checks, game counters, supplementary baggage checks, and Tourist tags, a high grade Patent shipping tag in attractive put-up for the home consumer. This item seems to have found a ready sale in England. Though tissue paper was not yet profitable, sales were growing rapidly. For Druggists were added Wooden Drug boxes and absorbent cotton.

During this period, also, a large number of new conveniences were taken on for resale. Among these were Swift's wood mailing cases, Kimball's pin tickets, Snow's adhesive binder, McGill's fasteners, and Miller's jewelry cleaning specialties, later characterized by E. W. as "an awful sink." Mentzel suspension rings were manufactured by Dennison on a royalty basis. Russell's deadlock fasteners, Pennell's meat hook, and Dennison's rapid tag fastener were also added at this time.

One new item completely captured E. W.'s imagination. This was Rowland's Star Copying Pad, a device which solved the problem of duplicating letters in those pre-typewriter days. E. W. was so enthusiastic over this device that he once jokingly offered Preston Pond the shipping tag business in exchange for it.

Nor was the jewelry line lacking in new developments. Satin cases were put out during these years, and Talbot in 1898 said that the handling of Levi Nye's Morocco cases by the Chicago store alone was the nucleus around which developed a large and profitable business. "With the addition of this line sales continued to rapidly increase, and the demand was such that we soon began the manufacture of them ourselves."¹

Nested picture top boxes were put out about 1875 to tempt the market

¹A Morocco and plush case shop was established at Brunswick in 1879.

and were advertised as "A very salable article for Holiday Trade." H. K. Dyer in the same year devised a new style pin and ear-ring box with a stand in it to bring the cushion flush with the top while the goods were on display. There was also a tendency in the jewelers' line to put out less expensive goods to accord with the times. Early in 1878 E. W. wrote Henry: "I mail one of our little triumphs in cheapening boxes, on Ring Trays. These cost 4.78 per gro against 9.50 as cheapest ever produced O.S." To the list of jewelers' sundries during these years were added spangled parchment tags, fancy wrapping papers, and cut tissues for holding watch parts during repairs.

Dennison's two-edged policy of merchandising—price reduction and versatility—was a large factor in rescuing the business from the slough of '75. The effects of depression on Dennison & Co. began to break during 1876. For 1877 dollar sales amounting to \$440,000 practically equaled those for 1874, when prices were higher. As to the opening of 1878 E. W. reported in February:

New York shows about 2,000 gain aside from Tiffany and 4,000 with. Cincinnati sends in 25% gain. Boston about 1,000 aside from export which was 1400 last Jan and more this.

With business, therefore, on the mend, E. W. could turn his attention to other matters. For some time he had felt that the future of the concern should be safeguarded. So far there had never been any question of his leadership, but what would happen when he had to give up? Henry, his natural successor, might never be able to take control. His answer to the problem was an incorporation which should include Perkins' "extraordinary manufacturing facilities with our wonderful means of disposing goods," an aspiration which E. W. in his comprehensive way declared would make them one of the strongest organizations in the world.

As early as October, 1873, after a trip to the branch offices, E. W. was impressed by the spirit of unity he observed, with "but one thought and one motive imbuing all, from the leaders to the smallest boys and that is in the way to forward the best interests of this enterprise."

His letter to Henry continued, "While Mr. M, Mr. H and yourself all co-operate with me to the fullest extent as partners in this now 'great industry,'

I feel keenly that we have other workers who have claims on the future of it more than to be as they are now, merely hirelings."

A far-reaching project of this kind was naturally slow to develop. In February, 1875, he wrote one of his long, persuasive letters to Perkins, setting forth the advantages of a united corporation, in which he says:



THE PERKINS PLANT IN 1878

But the greatest result may be expected from the fact that by a joint interest and the principal helpers becoming incorporators with us that each will find his best interest served by using his whole body soul and brains for the best interest of the whole, he being a part of that whole and its success in part is assured by his efforts. He is not only interested to produce results, but he is interested to economize. His views are immediately extended to the general results and not confined to the limits of his own branch.

This paragraph shows E. W. feeling his way toward the idea which underlies our present partnership plan. His aim was not only to perpetuate the

business, but by making the men on whom its future depended proprietors of that business, to call forth their creative interest in its welfare.

It was one thing to conceive the idea of uniting the Perkins plant and the Dennison Company into one corporation, but E. W. found it quite another to convince Mr. Perkins. In E. W.'s own words, this man with whom he had been closely associated for a quarter of a century was of a peculiar make-up:

Positive and self reliant, mastering success under the most adverse circumstances, a dictator in his little monarchy, peculiarly proud of his accomplishments and a most willing victim of flattery. Unhappy through life from this very impulsive action for good or for evil . . .

In 1875, as E. W. pointed out, Perkins was admirably situated, with a small but profitable business, much bound up with the interests of Dennison & Co. But looking into the future, E. W. saw dangers for them both,—first the necessity of increased facilities at Roxbury to handle Dennison's business, which small profits were forcing into larger proportions. "But the greatest danger seems to me to come from the calls that our reduced margins will make upon you for reduced margins on your work. . . . There are already lines of goods so close that no middle profit is to be had to enable competition in the market," for example, the common metal eyelet tags.

E. W.'s fear of friction caused by reduced profits was well grounded, for the next three years bore out his prophecy. Perkins' other chief customer, Towne & Co., had placed their business elsewhere, as a result of which Perkins began increasing prices to Dennison at the very time when E. W. was attempting to reduce his costs. Perkins' stronghold lay in the fact that his mechanical assistant, C. E. Sawyer, was bound to him by the ties of gratitude and life-long friendship, and Sawyer's brains were indispensable to Dennison & Co. Sawyer had made and patented some improvements on the Dennison tag machines, for which he began demanding royalty on each thousand tags produced, payable January 1, 1877. At Dennison's refusal to pay, Perkins coolly suggested that Dennison take the tag machines, leaving Sawyer's improvements behind. As this was the last thing E. W. wanted to do, he renewed his appeal for a joint corporation, but to no avail.

At length, early in 1878, E. W. delayed no longer but gathered his own forces together and on April 6 incorporated as the DENNISON MANUFACTURING CO. It was capitalized at \$150,000. The 1500 shares of common stock which represented this capital were divided as follows:

E. W. Dennison . . .	800
Albert Metcalf . . .	500
H. B. Dennison . . .	200

E. W.'s purpose was clearly that stock should be issued only to those in responsible positions with the Company. But the form of organization which he adopted because it was then in common use was not wholly suited to carrying out his purpose. First, eligibility for holding stock was left to the personal judgment of the Directors—fallible and biased as that might become. Second, stock was given or sold outright, eventually, therefore, to pass beyond the control of the Company. It was largely to correct these two evils that the partnership plan was adopted in 1911.

But to return to E. W.'s plan, by July of 1879 the capitalization had been increased \$50,000, and stock issued to Dyer and Benson, who joined the original three as Directors, and to J. F. Caldwell, a bookkeeper at the Boston store, who was appointed Clerk of the Board. Shares were offerd for sale to Gilbert and Goodwin of the New York staff, Talbot of St. Louis, Preston Pond of the Boston store, and W. D. Brigham.

E. W. was elected President, Metcalf Treasurer, and H. B. Dennison appointed Superintendent of the factory; Dyer was made Agent for the New York and Philadelphia stores, and Benson for Chicago, Cincinnati, and St. Louis. Thus we find the organization, though by no means as close knit as a modern corporation, gradually taking shape.

With Perkins still in ambush, the new Company was in a precarious position. During 1878 numerous offers were made him, all of which he flatly rejected. E. W. then tried to negotiate with Sawyer for the purchase of his patents. Failing this, one more offer was made for the Roxbury plant, which



John Wolcott Adams

E. W., THE SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS MAN, REVISITING HIS HOME TOWN

Perkins was finally prevailed upon to consider. Eighty-five thousand dollars was the price agreed upon, and on April 1, 1879, this great bone of contention became Dennison property.

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We have now brought our story to the point where the Dennison Manufacturing Co. took on not only its present name, but something even of its present form. From a struggling family industry, it had become a country-wide concern. From one-man control it had passed through partnership to incorporation. Beginnings, however small, had been made in all directions—in active merchandising, in domestic and foreign expansion, in policy building, and in organization. The strictly pioneer stages were over, and the period of constructive consolidation had begun.

The story is not complete, however, without a final word on E. W. Dennison. Though he still had eight years before him, during all of which he remained acknowledged leader of the business, the incorporation marks a definite goal in his life. From then on business for him was more of a luxury than a necessity, though to the very end it remained his most absorbing delight.

It is hard to say just what made E. W. succeed in the business world where Aaron failed. For E. W. was not only less creative than his brother, but on close study lacked many qualities of the good business man. He was careless and unmethematical, a starter not a finisher, and like many undue enthusiasts, inclined to scatter his forces. Yet, though Aaron originated the mechanical system of watch making and organized a group which later became the Waltham Watch Co., he lived an obscure life abroad, frequently in need of the aid which his successful brother generously gave him.

One great advantage E. W. did have—the ability to get on with business associates. Whereas Aaron, though lovable himself, was in constant difficulties with his partners or employers, E. W. was able to attract and hold men to him. This magnetism seems to have been spontaneous and all-inclusive; and fortunately, among those drawn into the circle were some with the qualities he himself lacked. Metcalf, for one, was a much-needed steadyng force, for though E. W. referred at times to his "customary caution," caution was never his strongest point. As a man of action, not an analyst, he seldom saw the need of it.

On the other hand, he had in large measure that virtue of the active man—resourcefulness. An obstacle to him was never an obstacle—merely a problem to be solved. Particularly was this true in the mechanical field. From his father he inherited a "machine sense" and though no draughtsman, he devised for others to execute. For example, in 1875 he patented a paper gauge for measuring the thickness of stock, the principle of which is still used. His suggested method for making cardboard smooth on both sides was a tremendous saving to paper manufacturers. Again, by his "new dodge" for patent tag stock, as he wrote Henry in 1878, "we obtain the strength and finish combined that we have never been able to before and at a price beyond comparison cheap."

One rare trait which we have seen in E. W. is the ability to right-about-face. We saw it in him as a young man when he mapped out and followed a program of economy; again, thirty years later, when he led the campaign against drink by cutting his own rations to a nightly glass. Something the same thing happened with his disposition. E. W.'s early temperament, as we have seen, was not above reproach, but when he was about thirty-five, an incident occurred which he described to Henry many years later:

On the 10th anniversary of our wedding day, Theodore Parker married Elijah Shute and Margaret Palfrey, and I went to the wedding. . . . it was at that wedding that that great man Parker (who knew more of human nature than any other man that ever lived) showed me wherein the greatest happiness in life consisted—i.e., in making others happy. I began this right off at home and from there the result seemed so good that I dreamed of the good I might do in developing this new industry, and from a violent tempered man I became the reverse unless I was touched in some tender place.

Unless I was touched in some tender place—it is the candor of this last reservation, more than the change itself, which endears the man to us. Had he been more perfect, or less honest, his memory would not have lived so long in the hearts of those who knew him.

